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THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. LUKE

THE Third Gospel is not a book complete in itself. It is only the first portion of a larger historical work, which was apparently designed to be executed in three volumes. The third volume is not extant; in fact, there is very little reason to suppose that it was ever actually written, but the absence of an adequate peroration at the end of the Acts of the Apostles (which forms the second volume of the series), shows us that a further instalment must have been contemplated. The Gospel itself gives no hint as to its authorship, but unbroken tradition has assigned it to St. Luke.

1. *Who was St. Luke?*—In the New Testament there are only three references to him, and all occur in St. Paul's Epistles written from Rome during the time of his imprisonment. Writing to the Colossians, St. Paul gives them the greeting of 'Luke, the beloved physician' (iv. 14). In the Second Epistle to Timothy, written at the time of his final trial, he says, 'only Luke is with me' (iv. 11), while in the Epistle to Philemon he speaks of him in conjunction with Marcus, Aristarchus, and Demas as 'my fellow-labourer' (ver. 24). There is nothing in these passages to conflict with the 'we' passages in the Acts, and if the tradition is to be trusted, that St. Luke was the author of the Gospel and the Acts, these references go far to confirm it. Moreover, the character of St. Luke portrayed in the three short references of St. Paul—his affection and devotion, his energy and his professional skill—finds strong support in the unconscious revelation of his own personality by the author of the Gospel and the Acts.

It is hard to estimate our debt to St. Luke. He has left us the fullest, perhaps the most beautiful, life of Jesus, and the story of the spread of the Christian movement from Jerusalem to Rome. And the two volumes come from the pen of a man with world sympathies—a scholar, an able writer, and a man with a sense of his responsibility as an historian. Perhaps two points illustrate his reliability: the first is that his Gospel is free from any trace of the controversies of the early Church (for example, the controversy over circumcision—he records the circumcision of both John and Jesus); the second is that he is never overshadowed by St. Paul. Great as is the place given to St. Paul in the Acts, there is nothing in the Gospel approaching to Pauline bias. If any influence is to be found in the pages of St. Luke's Gospel it is to be found in the social aspect of the teaching of Jesus. Jesus is especially the friend of the poor, the outcast and the sinner; the rich are severely warned of the dangers of riches. The source of this influence would seem to be the actual conditions of work in a rich city like Corinth, where Luke saw the appeal that the gospel made to the poor, and the inability of the rich to respond to the sacrifice demanded. This might naturally lead him to give us much of our Lord's teaching on the point.

2. Of the place where the Gospel was composed nothing can be predicated with any approach to certainty. There is no hint, either in the Gospel or in the Acts, of any locality, and of St. Luke's movements we know nothing beyond what we gather from the Acts and the Epistles. This would limit the choice to Macedonia, Palestine, or Rome. Some have urged that the Gospel must

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have been written outside Palestine because of the notes of explanation on places in Palestine (i. 26, ii. 4, xxiii. 51), but the class of readers for whom the Gospel was designed required some such explanations. Rome, Cæsarea, Asia Minor, all have their supporters, and Jerome states somewhat vaguely that it was written 'in the district of Achaia and Bœotia.' St. Luke's residence in Palestine prior to the final departure of St. Paul for Rome would have given him ample opportunity for the collection of his materials, but the balance of probability is in favour of the actual composition and publication of the Gospel in Rome.

3. The *date* can hardly be later than A.D. 80, unless the Evangelist wrote in extreme old age. And the date must be earlier than Acts, as the Gospel is referred to in that work (Acts i. 1, 2). Can we fix the date more accurately than this? Many critics think that we can. They say that it must be later than the Fall of Jerusalem, A.D. 70. It is said that the Gospel presupposes that Jerusalem was already destroyed. The arguments for this are: (1) In Luke xxi. 20-24, the utter destruction of Jerusalem is foretold with peculiar clearness. A similar argument is employed by many in speaking of Matt., an argument which seems to imply that our Lord did not foretell that destruction because He could not. This argument must be dismissed. (2) In Luke xxi. 20 there is no editorial note like that in Matt. xxiv. 15, to emphasize the necessity of paying peculiar attention to our Lord's warning about the coming destruction; and in Luke xxi. 25 the final judgment is not so clearly connected with the Fall of Jerusalem as in Matt. xxiv. 29, where it is foretold as coming 'immediately after the tribulation of those days.' Moreover, xxi. 24 suggests that the writer was well aware that an interval must elapse between the two great events. This is the only good argument for placing Luke later than Matt., and it certainly deserves careful attention. At the same time, we must observe the following facts: (*a*) St. Luke probably did not know St. Matthew's Gospel, otherwise he would not have given such very different, though not contradictory, accounts of the infancy and the resurrection of our Lord; (*b*) St. Luke may perhaps owe the superior accuracy of his report of the eschatological discourse of Christ to persons whom he knew at Jerusalem in A.D. 56; (*c*) St. Luke himself possibly thought that the end of the world would follow soon after the destruction of Jerusalem, for in xxi. 32 he seems to connect the final judgment with his own generation. But the statement is not so strong as in Matt. and Mark. For St. Luke says, 'This generation shall not pass away till all be accomplished,' while Matt. and Mark say, 'until all *these* things be accomplished,' evidently including the final judgment. Thus it seems reasonable to date the Gospel according to St. Luke soon after A.D. 70, before the Gospel according to St. Matthew was widely circulated.

There are, however, arguments for an earlier date. It is argued that the Fall of Jerusalem was a crisis of such vast importance to Judaism and Christianity that it seems incredible that any author could knowingly have passed it by with but the most cursory allusion, or without indeed dwelling upon its bearing on the work and teaching of Jesus. It was a crisis which must have coloured the whole tone of thought towards the Jews. Again, there has been a growing consensus of opinion that Luke closes the book without knowing of the release of St. Paul from the first imprisonment in A.D. 62-3, and that the *Acts* must have been finished before that date. This necessitates the Gospel being placed earlier; how much earlier it is difficult to say, but not later than about 60.

It will be well to quote Sanday's judgment: 'Roughly speaking, there are three opinions which may be said to be at present held: (1) that of the Left wing in criticism, that the Gospel dates from about the year 100 A.D. or from the early years of the second century; (2) that of the extreme Right, that it was written about the year 63 A.D.; (3) the middle view, which would place it together with the Acts about the year 80 A.D.

(1) The only tangible argument in favour of the first of these views is the assumption that the author of the Gospel and Acts, which are now admitted to be by the same hand, had read the *Antiquities* of Josephus, which were written and published about the year 93-94. But this assumption I am not alone in believing to be wholly erroneous. It rests on little more than the fact that both writers relate or allude to the same events, though the differences between them are really more marked than the resemblances.

(2) For the date 63 A.D. there is in like manner

only one substantial argument, that the Acts was probably written about the time at which the narrative contained in it ends, and of course the Gospel a little before. But to this there are two objections: (i.) that the process described in the preface implies a longer period than would fall within the year A.D. 63; it is probable that the common basis of our three Synoptic Gospels was itself not committed to writing so early; and (ii.) that there is a rather strong presumption that the Gospel was written after and not before the Fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

(3) These considerations, which appear to me to be sound, turn the scale in favour of the third view; which would be more precisely that the Acts was written about 80 A.D. and the Gospel some time in the five years preceding.'[1]

4. The Evanglist's *purpose* in writing this Gospel is clearly and precisely stated by St. Luke in the preface. He desired to instruct his Gentile friend Theophilus in the truth of the Christian faith and of the life of Christ. He had the ideals and literary qualifications of the historian, and desired to write a full account of the life of Jesus from the very beginning, including in his survey even the events preceding the birth of John the Baptist. Though not an eye-witness himself, he took the greatest pains to secure accurate information from the Apostles and those who had been in close contact with Jesus. So far as he could, he wished to follow a strict chronological order, but when, as was often the case, much of what he found recorded had no definite connexion of time or place, he exercised his own discretion, and grouped incidents and discourses together, as in the case of his teaching upon prayer. His wide survey makes it clear that he intended his Gospel for the Greek-speaking Gentile world, and in pursuance of this object he avoids the use of Jewish words and phrases. He makes little reference to the Mosaic Law, the Old Testament, and prophecy. The preface at once stamps the Gospel as the work of a scholarly Hellenist with a mastery of a good literary style; when, however, he is translating from an Aramaic document, as in chapters i. and ii., he faithfully renders the Hebraic constructions into Greek, and displays a great knowledge of the language and style of the Septuagint.

[1] W. Sanday, *Inspiration*, 277.

5. St. Luke says that he has made up his mind to 'write *in order*.' What 'order' does he mean? Is it chronological? We may say that his story is both chronological and complete, *from his point of view*. But if we expect St. Luke, or any of the Evangelists, to give us a detailed and exhaustive history such as a modern biographer would have given us, duly noting every fact of any importance, and each fact in its exact historical order, we shall be misreading the writer's purpose, and we shall certainly be disappointed.

But, however incomplete from our modern point of view the Gospels, regarded as biographies, may be, *some order* will be requisite, if they are not to be mere collections of anecdotes and detached sayings. This 'order' will be of a twofold character —the *historical order* of events and the *logical order* of thought. In others words, the events must be told more or less as they happened; and the connexion of the various parts of the story, and especially the reason why the Lord said a particular saying at a particular time, must be clearly brought out. In both respects Luke is more orderly than Matthew or Mark.

(1) As regards *order of time*, St. Luke, where he can, inserts dates and points of contact with the history both of the Jews and of the Roman Empire (i. 5, ii. 1f., iii. 1f.). And he indicates the time of an event (i. 26, ii. 21, 42, iii. 23, vii. 1, ix. 28, x. 21, xiii. 1, 31), but often very vaguely (vi. 1, vii. 11); the phrase 'on one of those days' (found only in Luke v. 17, viii. 22, xx. 1). Even in his story of the last week he is vague at times (xix. 47, xx. 1, xxi. 37). And he often omits an indication of time where we should have expected it (v. 1, 12, 17, viii. 4, 19, 22). Clearly in such cases his authorities do not enable him to be more precise.

(2) In marking *the order of thought*, St. Luke's superiority is more easily seen. He always tries to show how one thing develops out of another. Thus, the unusual circumstances of John the Baptist's birth tend to make faith in the greater miracle of the Lord's birth easier to believe, not only for the Virgin Mary herself (i. 36f.), but also for the readers of his Gospel. Then again, the relationship and friendly intercourse between the two families, and their mutual hopes with regard to the two children, help us to understand the after-relations of John and Jesus. Theophilus

would certainly know that the Christ in whom Luke believed was known as 'Jesus of Nazareth,' and probably that He was born in Bethlehem. This would naturally lead St. Luke to explain how it was that His mother, who lived in Nazareth, came to visit Bethlehem just before His birth. And so on.

6. The Gospel of St. Luke has been called by Renan (a good judge of style) the most beautiful book in the world. St. Luke's *style* as a writer is marked especially by versatility. The preface is written in excellent Greek. Then follows the Gospel of the infancy and childhood, the most beautiful part of the book, which abounds in Hebrew idioms. Then comes the body of the Gospel (chap. iii. to the end), which is not much less Hebrew in character than the Gospels of Matthew and Mark.

Our author may be called the poet-painter among the Evangelists. We owe to him narratives of brilliant colouring and finish, such as the woman who was a sinner; Mary and Martha; the preaching at Nazareth; the draught of fishes; the disciples of Emmaus; Simeon in the Temple; and—most glorious of all—the birth of our Lord.

The consummate literary skill shown in Luke's work must impress every reader who allows free play to his sense of literary effect. We feel that in this work we have to deal with an author who handles his materials freely and with perfect mastery. The unity of style and treatment in the narrative, its dramatic character, varying according to the country and the action and the character of every speaker—so Greek in Athens, so 'provincial' in the Roman colonies Lystra and Philippi, so Hebraic in Galilee or by the Jordan, and so Lukan everywhere—this character and individuality, shown in numberless ways, make it clear that the author was no clipper-up of fragments from other writers, no mere scissors-and-paste editor of scraps, no mere second-hand composer, dependent on the accidental character of his 'sources.' Only a person who has blinded himself to literary feeling by the strength of a fixed prejudice could fail to perceive the literary quality of this history, and to infer from it the real unity of the work.

7. What were his *sources?* There is no great difficulty in recognising two main sources of his Gospel. The first is St. Mark's Gospel, or a Gospel upon which St. Mark's was based. This he valued highly and used freely. In the main he modelled his own history upon it. He borrowed its very words and phrases. This may be seen with great clearness in the question respecting His authority put to our Lord in the Temple. Write the accounts according to St. Mark, St. Luke and St. Matthew side by side. Then underline in St. Mark all the words which are found in the other two. The words thus underlined read as a perfectly intelligible narrative. This similarity is due to no mere coincidence, nor is it the result of faithful remembrance of the actual words, because the *framework* in which the spoken words are set is similar. 'They *reasoned* in themselves *saying.*' All three writers use the same verbs 'reason' and 'say,' and all alike remark upon the inner feeling of the antagonists. Such facts could be multiplied a hundredfold, and they compel us to conclude that one of the many written narratives to which St. Luke refers in his preface was St. Mark's Gospel, and that from it he derived the most material help.

But scholars are agreed that at least one more document underlies this Gospel, containing either sayings of Jesus or incidents which gave rise to them. Its original form would be that of the papyrus recently discovered at Oxyrhynchus in Egypt, which consists of a number of sentences purporting to come from the Master, each introduced by the words 'Jesus says.' Opinions differ as to whether Q—the sign, German in origin, used by scholars when referring to this lost document—was a Gospel in the full sense of the word, whether Mark made use of it, and whether Luke and the author of our First Gospel had access to it in the same form. Variations between Matthew and Luke are so considerable, even when they run in parallel lines, that many scholars feel themselves compelled to think of Q as existing in two editions or of two Q's, just as they suppose Luke and Matthew to have seen separate editions of Mark, each of them different from the Gospel as we possess it. We shall be safe in assuming that Luke and Matthew did use a collection of the sayings of Jesus in one form or another.

With regard to St. Luke's use of his other

sources (for example, in chapters i., ii.), a close study of the text of the Gospel shows that nowhere does he seem to have incorporated a document in its entirety; he re-writes his material, and his own style and language characterize every section of the Gospel. Thus we conclude that, however many the sources used by Luke, he used them as an historian of literary ability and learning. He was no mere compiler, but in the fullest sense an author.

Our Evangelist's intimate account of the birth of Jesus may well have come from Mary herself, as also the story of His boyhood, and the detailed report of the visit to Nazareth. The twice-repeated statement that 'Mary kept these sayings in her heart' seems to imply, 'She kept them for me.' That some strongly Jewish source underlies chapters i. and ii. is evident from their Hebraic cast, remarkable in a book expressly meant for a Gentile, and from their suffusion with the language and the spirit of the Old Testament. The little circle of old-fashioned people who received the new-born Messiah supplied their Gentile friend with his information here.

Characteristics of St. Luke's Gospel.

What features are there in the Gospel of Luke which are either wholly absent from, or less conspicuous in, the other Gospels? There are, of course, many sayings and parables given in Luke which are not found elsewhere. The parables of the Good Samaritan, of the Prodigal Son, of the Pharisee and the Publican, are conspicuous instances. And we shall do well to remember that nothing in the least like them in form or style is to be found in Christian literature outside the Synoptic Gospels. But the presence of these parables in Luke does not answer our question: their teaching, after all, is much the same as that which is given in the other Gospels.

In general, we observe that each Gospel has its own characteristics. St. Mark's is graphic and rugged; it thrusts prominently before our eyes the outstanding facts of our Lord's life, and unfolds His methods. St. Matthew's is rich and rotund; its sonorous phrases have a satisfying sound, and there is reason to think that it was written thus to adapt it for catechetical use in public worship. St. John's Gospel breathes a mystical air and lifts us to eternal realities. But when we turn to St. Luke's we are struck with a literary ability which is lacking in the other three; we are struck, too, with a sympathy, a universality, a kindliness and a grace which have always made it the popular Gospel.

1. Burkitt says that, to his mind, the two tendencies which are really characteristic of the writings of St. Luke are a tendency towards *voluntary poverty* and a tendency towards *asceticism*. This is the same attitude of mind that we find in the letters of St. Paul. St. Paul, like his Master, wished his disciples to be free from anxiety about worldly matters. Marriage and property were not unlawful, but they were roots which attached a man to this world, and St. Paul felt sure that the time was short and that the fashion of this world was passing away. We never do justice to the theory and practice of the first two generations of Christians if we forget even for an instant that there brooded over them the shadow of the anticipated end of all things.

After the Fall of Jerusalem and the extinction of the Jewish State the Christian Churches began gradually to find out that the end was not yet, but the view of life which was reasonable in Judæa for half a century after the Crucifixion continued to assert itself as the ethical ideal in the Christian communities. There was indeed much to encourage asceticism in their ranks. For the first three hundred years the Christian Church had a precarious existence, being sometimes actively persecuted by the State, sometimes left alone, but never formally permitted to live. In such circumstances earthly ties, whether of property or of wife and children, are more or less of an encumbrance; they tend to make a man less eager, less whole-hearted. And so there sprang up the notion that these things are inconsistent with the highest Christian life; that the ideal Christian should be penniless and unmarried.

This point of view makes itself felt all through the writings of St. Luke. 'Blessed are ye poor; for yours is the kingdom of God!' 'Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation! Woe unto you, ye that are full now, for ye shall hunger!' 'Sell that ye have, and give alms; make for yourselves purses which wax not old.' Abraham says to the rich man in the

parable, 'Remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now here he is comforted, and thou art tormented.' These sayings go further, are more uncompromising, than those which we find in the other Gospels. And as to the other point, I think it is impossible to read through this Gospel and the Acts without feeling that all the writer's sympathy is for the unmarried and the widows, from Anna the daughter of Phanuel, who had been a widow for eighty-four years, to the four virgin daughters of Philip the Evangelist. The tendency of Luke is perhaps most clearly seen in the wording of our Lord's reply to the Sadducees, whereby it is made to appear that those who are worthy to attain the resurrection from the dead do not marry like ordinary men and women. According to Mark our Lord says, 'When they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage'; but in the Gospel of Luke the words of the answer are: 'The sons of this world marry, and are given in marriage; but they that are accounted worthy to attain to that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage.' The wording has been made, as I cannot but think, intentionally ambiguous. It was with good reason that the heretic Marcion, who rejected marriage altogether for Christians, chose out the Gospel of Luke as the only one which could be made to fit with his own teaching. [1]

The Jesus of St. Luke's Gospel has for the poor His tenderest words and sweetest promises. His mother offers the purification of the poor. The first specific declaration of His teaching thereon is that application of prophecy to Himself in the synagogue at Nazareth—'the Spirit of the Lord . . . hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.' The first sentence of the other version of the Sermon on the Mount is—'blessed be ye poor.' Those whom true disciples are counselled to invite are 'the poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind, who cannot recompense them.' The beggar is carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.

Believers in Christ try to render this compensation of poverty intelligible to Christian reason exercised upon social problems; and truly they *can* do so. Yet, after all explanation, a something always remains in His teaching about poverty which our generation keeps as far out of sight as possible. This generation has its ear and heart finely touched to hear the bitter cry of the 'submerged tenth.' Social Christianity, like moral philosophy, has a great proposition whose 'categorical form' involves an 'epitactic meaning.' 'Poverty is blessed'; then 'give alms.' But have not even those who appeal most loudly to Christ's name grown afraid to tell the poor that, after all, their poverty, if rightly borne, has one special blessing—the smile and the promise of Christ?

Two great dangers in money-making and money-holding are signalized by our Lord in St. Luke's Gospel, and help to bring out this leading idea.

(1) The first great danger is the *unresting and feverish absorption* to which it leads. When the man died who, in the present generation, had amassed the largest fortune which was ever made by advertisement of a popular medicine—leaving, it is to be added, a vast sum for public purposes—the chief organ of contemporary opinion printed a striking article upon the entire singleness of aim necessary for money-making on a grand scale.

With that article we may well compare the utterance of one of the most simple and transparent of human souls:

> Bear me, dear Lord! where'er Thou art—
> O never then from me depart;
> For to my soul 'tis hell to be
> But for one moment without Thee.

There is something terrible in this *metallization* of spirit required by the process prescribed in the organ of the wisdom of the world. A wall so crowded can have no room for the image of Christ.

(2) A second danger is *deterioration of character*. The soul becomes vulgarized. A want of consideration and sympathy *disennobles* the whole nature. Not seldom one who has been conspicuous for liberality in narrow circumstances becomes ungenerous when suddenly transplanted into opulence. An offensive ostentation and sense of personal importance betray themselves in little traits of language which reveal character. To use vulgar but expressive words, such persons 'stink of money.'

This selfish, feverish restlessness is drawn in

[1] F. C. Burkitt, *The Gospel History and its Transmission*, 210.

deathless and terrible lines by our Lord in an awful parable peculiar to this Gospel. The rich man, just before a death of violence, held that dread dialogue in his own heart. *Seven futures,* in rapid succession, to show that such satisfaction as riches can give is always in the distance—then *six presents,* and all *selfish!* 'So is he that layeth up treasure for *himself,* and is not rich toward God.'

2. Asceticism has generally tended towards the equalization of the sexes. The historical opposite to the ascetic ideal was not one in which woman was looked upon as the equal complement of man, but one in which woman was looked upon as the Divinely ordained household drudge or the plaything of man. The old idea of the family, at least in the times we are considering, meant the relegation of the woman to the background. And so the Gospel which most strikes the ascetic note is also that which tells us most of the part played by women in the gospel history. It is an old observation that the Nativity story is told by Luke from the woman's point of view. But elsewhere also women play a prominent and independent part in the narrative.

In the early chapters we find Elisabeth, Anna, the Blessed Virgin. The Mary of St. Luke is at once identical with the Mary of St. Matthew, and yet more full of life and colour. In St. Matthew, she is the pure and much-tried woman; put to shame, indeed, for a little in the eyes of her betrothed, but nobly justified by an angel's lips. She is 'The Virgin' of Isaiah's prophecy. We hear something of her at the visit of the Wise Men, something of her hurried flight into Egypt, and of her return into the land of Israel. But in the Apostle's delineation there is a singular reserve. Mary stands before us, the Mother-maid; splendid in the light of prophecy, statuesque, silent as a picture, sad and beautiful as a dream. The Child Jesus is not so much upheld by her as floating in light on her arms or upon her breast. But in St. Luke the picture is clothed in flesh and blood; the dream grows real. There is breath and poetry upon her lips. Her heart beats quicker at the angel's salutation. Maiden modesty and saintly resignation to burning shame fill her brief but pregnant words. The hoarded music of her soul finds measured utterance of its serene and stately joy. The Magnificat, chanted in so many churches, is the highest specimen of the subtle influence of the song of purity, so exquisitely described by a great poet. It is the *Pippa Passes* among the liturgies of the world. It is a woman teaching in the Church for ever, without usurpation of authority, but with a saintly quietness that knows no end. The psychologist seems to sound the depths of that nature—ever watching and keeping close the several single things which are so many special utterances of God; ever comparing them with, and interpreting them by, facts. He lets us see that as she kept them closely, so she kept them on through all circumstances.

Many other pictures of women succeed: the widow of Nain; the sinner who wiped the feet of Jesus with her long hair; the women who ministered unto Him of their substance—Mary that was called Magdalene, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others; the impulsive woman who lifted up her voice and said unto Him, 'blessed is the womb that bare thee.' He likewise shows us the contrasted natures of Mary and Martha; the weeping daughters of Jerusalem, called upon to

> pay betimes
> A moiety of that mass of moans to come;

the service done by women for the burial, and after the Resurrection as apostles to the Apostles.

It is worthy of notice that this mission of the Saviour to womanhood occurs so prominently in the Gospel for the Gentiles. Among them more especially woman was degraded—sometimes a mere drudge performing the meanest household tasks; sometimes the helpless tool of hideous lust; occasionally a royal harlot or a splendid tigress. The peculiar power given to her by her very weakness was scarcely recognized. At the hand and touch of Jesus that hidden wealth of tenderness was disclosed. From her out of whom Jesus cast seven devils, to the Chinese woman converted last year, womanhood confesses—'Christ first taught us that we were women.' While the New Testament tells us of some wicked women, yet the Gospels give no record of any who actually opposed Jesus Himself during His ministry. That sad distinction has been reserved for later days—for those who compose romances in the long hours of leisure which they owe to His influence, and

who write sarcastic essays with the hands which He has set free.

Chapter viii. 47, 48 directs our attention to the courage of the woman with the hemorrhage; 'before all the people' is found in Luke only. His knowledge of some types of feminine human nature is evident in the domestic drama in x. 38ff. (Martha is sketched to the life in the words of Jesus to her), and in xi. 27f., where we have the obtrusively mothering soul who, when she listens to Jesus, interrupts His discourse with a very audible wish that she were His mother. Chapter xiii. 11ff. gives us a pathetic picture of an invalid woman; in xv. 8ff. we have a parable which would appeal to women set alongside that of the lost sheep; and in xviii. 1ff. another kind of woman—this time the persistent and rather shrewish widow—is added to our portrait-gallery. 'Lest by her continual coming she weary me' is a misleadingly tame translation; the clause really means, 'Lest, if she keeps on coming, she should give me a black eye,' or, as modern slang has it, 'one under the eye.' The 'Lewis' Syriac version has 'Lest she take hold of me'; the judge is actually afraid, or pretends to be afraid, of assault and battery. *Codex Bezae* at xxiii. 2 mentions that Jesus was charged with 'leading astray women and children'; this reading conveys to us a sense of the scorn which the enemies of Jesus felt for feminine intelligence, and is an indirect tribute to the loyalty of the women to Him. Chapter xxiii. 27, again, suggests the mutual sympathy which must have existed between Jesus and women, even when the men forsook Him; and in xxiii. 49 we are told that the friends of Jesus did not altogether forsake Him, least of all the women. Through the Resurrection story the women who loved Jesus are even more to the fore than in the other Gospels, and there is a touch of resentment in xxiv. 11, 'And these words appeared to them like *women's gossip*' (A.V. 'idle tales'); the 'Lewis' Syriac has 'As if they had spoken out of their wonder,' a still more striking suggestion of hysteria. On the whole, men do not come out well in comparison with women in this Gospel. In xi. 31, 'The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the *men* of this generation' (Matthew, who puts the 'men of Nineveh' first, while Luke gives the 'queen of the south' pride of place, has simply 'with this generation'), and xvii. 34, 35, where the men appear to be in bed while the women are working, are examples in point; according to Matt. xxiv. 40, 41, all four are at work, the men on the land, and the women at the mill. It is well known that the story of the woman 'taken in adultery' found in John vii. 53-viii. 11 does not really belong to the Fourth Gospel. Papias, reported by Eusebius, tells a similar story, which appears to come from the lost Gospel 'to the Hebrews,' but in the Ferrar group of MSS. it follows Luke xxi. 38; traces of Luke's hand have been found in the wording of the story, and it is certainly a passage after his own heart.

3. It follows that St. Luke's is the Gospel of the *home*. It is quite possible that this 'beloved physician' understood the lives of the poor as well as those of the rich, and that his profession led him naturally to take a sympathetic interest in the home life of those around him. The effect of his professional knowledge upon his language may easily be over-stated, but there is quite sufficient evidence to show that technical medical terms are employed. It is Luke alone who records our Lord's entertainment in the houses of Pharisees. He gives us picture after picture, drawn with artless simplicity, of the social intercourse of Jesus. The meal in the house of Martha and Mary, the walk to Emmaus, the sojourn with Zacchæus, all illustrate the homeliness of Christ, and nearly every parable peculiar to this Gospel is marked by the same simplicity and sympathy with the details of ordinary home life.

And it is the Gospel of *childhood*. Luke alone tells us about the birth and infancy of John the Baptist, and all the marvels connected with it—the annunciation to Zacharias in the Temple, the paralysis of the tongue of that unbeliever, the miraculous quickening of Elisabeth in her old age, the restoration of the power of speech to Zacharias at the time of the birth of his son, and the use he made of it in singing a psalm of praise to God. This birth in old age, this temporary dumbness, and this loosening of a paralyzed tongue are all of interest to the physician as well as to the writer of the gospel history.

Matthew tells us something about the birth of Jesus, but Luke adds the story of the annunciation to Mary, the visit to Elisabeth, the singing of the Magnificat, the heralding of the heavenly host,

the visit of the shepherds, the circumcision, the purification, the meeting with Simeon and Anna, the child's growth in wisdom and stature and grace, and the twelve-year-old boy's interest in the Temple and its teachers of the Law.

Mark and Matthew tell us that they brought little children to Jesus, but Luke tells us that these little ones were babes. They were innocent, helpless, clinging, dependent, trustful infants, of whom Jesus said, 'To such belongeth the kingdom of God.' Certain chapters of the Third Gospel will always be the chapters we shall most delight to read to the children, and the chapters which the children will be most delighted to hear. They will always love best the Gospel with the story of the shepherds and the angels, the Gospel which tells how Jesus allowed the mothers to bring their babies to Him, the Gospel written by the beloved physician, who loved the little folks and so thought it worth while to write a part of his story for them.

4. St. Luke's is the Gospel of *pity*. Its sympathy reaches even to the social outcasts. Luke vi. 35, in the margin of the Revised Version, reads, Jesus despaired 'of no man.' That might be made the text of the entire narrative. Luke was like his Master again at this point. The brand of public infamy had no weight for him. His sympathies went out to all who were in need, even as the sympathies of Jesus always had been manifested most to those who needed them most.

In the Acts of Paul and Thecla we read that Paul said of Jesus that He was the only one who sympathized with a world gone astray. In the Epistle to the Hebrews we read that Jesus is our great High Priest, being able to sympathize with the ignorant and the erring. It is this compassionate Christ whom Luke sets before us in his pages. He is seeking not the self-satisfied, but the self-despairing. It was the sickest who had greatest need. It was those whom all others had deserted who most required a friend. Jesus in this Gospel is the Good Shepherd seeking for the outcast in the farthest mountains of social ostracism or wilful sin. Jesus was a Jew. He had a Jewish training. He lived always in a Jewish environment. He never had the advantage of foreign travel, and He never came under the broadening influence of residence among the many races of men. Yet He never displays any Jewish narrowness or prejudice. He is interested in all men alike. No man, of whatever nationality, or of whatever previous spiritual condition, is beyond His sympathy or the ready proffer of His help.

(1) This is the Gospel in which we read of the prodigal son who wastes all his living on harlots, and yet is not beyond reclamation, and who comes back at last to the father's home and to the unhesitating and undiminished love of the father's heart.

(2) This is the Gospel of the publican Zacchæus, generally regarded as a sinner with whom no respectable people ought to have any social dealings, but with whom Jesus went to lodge, and whom Jesus acknowledged as a son of Abraham.

(3) This is the Gospel of the sinful woman, with whom Simon the Pharisee would have been ashamed to show any personal acquaintance in public, but whom Jesus recognized, whose service He gladly accepted, and whose sins He freely forgave.

(4) This is the Gospel in which the crucified criminal, a coarse bandit who had been given up by the State as a hopeless case, and was paying the penalty of his many crimes, walked straight into paradise with the sinless Lord.

In this Gospel the harlot and the criminal, the prodigal and the social pariah, of whatever class or condition, are freely offered the society and the service of the purest and the best. Do the preachers of to-day associate with these classes? Are they on terms of familiar acquaintance with them? Are they continually finding converts among them? Are they continually proving that they who are forgiven most love most, and that from these classes the most devoted saints may come? If they are not, their gospel must be somewhat different from the gospel of Luke and his Lord; or, if they have the same gospel, their ministration of it must be somewhat different.

5. It is the gospel of *healing*. We are not surprising to find Jesus depicted in this Gospel as the healer *par excellence*. In ix. 1, 2, the healing of diseases is emphatically included in the Apostles' commission (cf. also ix. 6). In Mark vi. 7, on the other hand, only 'authority over unclean spirits' is mentioned, though we are told in Mark vi. 13,

that they did heal 'many invalids,' 'anointing them with oil.' This last piece of information, which reminds us of Luke x. 34, James v. 14, is omitted here by Luke, perhaps because it was not inserted in the copy of St. Mark's Gospel which he saw, or else because he preferred to think that the power of Jesus transmitted to His disciples was enough without the use of medicines. In the charge of the Seventy, moreover, healing takes precedence even of preaching. 'Maimed and halt' figure in the parable of the Banquet, whereas in his parallel story of the Prince's wedding Matthew refers only to the 'bad and good.' So, in ix. 11, Jesus teaches and heals the crowd on the eastern shore of the lakeside; in Mark vi. 34 we hear only of His teaching. Luke is interested, too, in the fact that the Gadarene had not for a long time been able to endure clothes on his body, that the man healed on the Sabbath day at Capernaum had his *right* hand withered, and he alone tells us of the healing of Malchus's *right* ear; he is careful to show that this was a surgical operation, for the ear had been taken clean off. Very significant also is the stately phrase '*accomplish* (text 'perform') cures' in xiii. 32. Does it mean that Jesus watched His patients after they were healed, to guard against relapse? It is everywhere apparent that, to this writer, preaching and the healing of body and soul held an equal place in the mission of Jesus, whereas to Mark, at least, preaching and teaching, whether public or private, always came first, and healing occupied a comparatively subordinate place.

6. It is evident, in both the Acts and the Gospel, that St. Luke's design is to set forth the universality of the gospel of Christ. In his Gospel-story, Luke presents our Lord as the universal Saviour of the world, and dwells on Christ's glad tidings of mercy, hope and love as addressed to all nations. In the Acts we see Christianity fulfilling its Founder's original design in a remarkable way. There we have the picture of the gradual development of the Church 'from Jerusalem to Rome,' as well as the universal proclamation and equally universal acceptance of the gospel all over the civilized world, in the face of much opposition and innumerable dangers and obstacles.

His leading idea of our Lord was that of the universal Saviour. From memoirs in the possession of original eye-witnesses, their friends and families; from living traditions of living men and women; from the teaching and personal influence of St. Paul; and, as we think in the highest degree probable, partly from his own personal recollection, the third Evangelist, under the guidance of the Spirit of Christ, described the Lord Jesus as such a man would love to contemplate the Head of our common humanity. In His cradle, in His miracles, in His words, in His sufferings, in His cross, in His glory, He was the light of the world, the light of the Gentiles. That which He said of a fallen son of Abraham is equally true of a fallen race. 'The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.' The Gospel according to St. Luke is in its leading idea the Gospel of fallen humanity.

St. Luke was not only capable of forming such an idea, he was actually possessed by it. He knew of Athens, its *agora,* its great sects of philosophers, its peculiar institutions. He reports St. Paul's lofty ethnological teaching upon the unity of the human race. He understands from his Master the influence of climate and geographical position upon the destinies of race. The crises of national development, and the boundaries shaped out by the course of events supply him with the keys to human history. He was fitted by all the conditions of his position and modes of thought to perceive that the mission of Jesus was a universal call with two necessary correlatives—universally impending judgment, and the universally intelligible witness of a Divine Being manifested in a human life and death.

This Gentile Evangelist, possibly writing his Gospel from Rome, the capital of the Gentile world, and impressed with the rejection of the Jews, brings before us the gospel as the gospel of humanity, the Saviour as the Saviour of the world. 'It forms,' says Schenkel, 'the Gentile-Christian antithesis to the Jewish-Christian thesis in the evangelical history, and it aims at giving Christianity an universal significance.' According to the preface, it is a composition intended to confirm the faith of a distinguished Gentile catechumen in evangelical truth. Born in a stable, under the Roman Empire, He who was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary is the Saviour of all men. His genealogy is brought up to Adam, the head of our humanity,

not to Abraham, the progenitor of the Jewish people. While St. Matthew speaks chiefly of the Twelve as representatives of the twelve tribes, St. Luke lays more stress upon the sending of the Seventy, that number being symbolic of the nations under the theocracy. The great episode of the so-called 'Journey Report' mentions a journey through Samaria to Judæa and Jerusalem. We may note in it tenderness to the Samaritans, in refusing to bring down fire from heaven, and in choosing the Samaritan as the embodiment of charity in that story whose beauty has been exceeded only by one other, 'of which Jesus is not the narrator but the subject.' We may also observe that breathing of deathless hope over Tyre and Sidon—'if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented.' Above all, we think of the parables of the Lost Sheep and the Prodigal Son, which touch upon the exile and the return of God's self-banished children with such tender and tearful love.

7. It is the Gospel of *prayer*. All the three Synoptists record that Christ prayed in Gethsemane. But on seven occasions St. Luke is alone in recording prayers which Jesus offered at the crises of His life: at His baptism (iii. 21); before His first conflict with the Pharisees and scribes (v. 16); before choosing the Twelve (vi. 12); before the first prediction of His Passion (ix. 18); at the Transfiguration (ix. 29); before teaching the Lord's Prayer (xi. 1); and on the Cross (xxiii. 34, 46). St. Luke mentions His insistence on the duty of prayer in two parables which no other Evangelist has recorded (xi. 5-13; xviii. 1-8). He alone relates the declaration of Jesus that He has made supplication for Peter, and His charge to the Twelve, 'Pray that ye enter not into temptation' (xxii. 32, 40).

The parables about prayer are exceedingly interesting, but also a little perplexing. The unjust judge and the churlish neighbour alike yield to pressure only when it is becoming a nuisance; but the story of the importunate widow leads straight up to a terrific problem—that of the 'forbearance of God'—and ends upon a sombre note, almost as though for once Jesus had lost heart. What strikes us in both cases is that our Lord is letting Himself go in the delight of story-telling; He must have loved telling stories for their own sake, apart from the 'moral.' All the more impressive is the reaction from the zest with which the story of the shrewish widow is told to the haunting cry with which it closes; 'Howbeit when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith'—faith of a genuine type 'on the earth?' Prayer, in St. Luke's Gospel, answers to the idea of 'faith' in Mark; it is the expression of trust and expectancy, which will not let itself be daunted by anything whatsoever. For it is true after all, in spite of the deep shadows which here and there pass over this radiant Gospel, that its final note is a great hope. We are not dependent upon human persistency; where it fails, and those who should watch are asleep, while men in their ignorance crucify Christ afresh, we have an Advocate with the Father, who prays for us and for them, as Jesus prayed for Peter and the others when they were not equal to praying for themselves, as He prayed for His murderers when, in their ignorance, they nailed to the cross their only Hope. We must rest in the prayers of Jesus, who by His passion became our Advocate, as He became upon the cross the one Mediator of salvation.

The effect of prayer upon two of the sublimest external phenomena in the Saviour's life is mentioned in conformity with this purpose of St. Luke. Prayer on His part is the psychological antecedent of the scene at the Baptism, and of the glory of the Transfiguration. To St. Luke alone we owe *both* notices. 'Jesus having been baptized, and *while he was yet praying,* the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily form, as a dove.' It was even *in the act of His yet praying* that the fashion of His countenance became other. There was not a single cleaving of the heavens; a sudden and theatrical radiance steeping face, and form, and vesture. There was a human factor, a spiritual condition, a suitable antecedent, in the perfect Man. The inward glory grew outward, coalesced with the opening sky, and melted into the light of heaven. Among human faces few, indeed, look like the face of an angel, or are touched with heavenly radiance. The only true light on any face is sure to be a light of prayer.

8. It is the Gospel of *joy and thanksgiving*. This Gospel begins with songs and ends with

songs, and there is singing and rejoicing all the way along. The Gospel according to St. Matthew begins with the wailing at Bethlehem for the children who were no more, and it ends with the sevenfold 'Woes' upon the Pharisees who would not be saved. In the Gospel according to St. Luke the saints are singing from the beginning to the close.

More often than in any other Gospel we are told that those who received special benefits glorified God for them. Matthew and Mark note this fact occasionally, but Luke notes it again and again. Plummer calls our attention, further, to the fact that the expression 'praising God' is almost peculiar to Luke in the New Testament. The phrase 'blessing God' found in Luke i. 64, ii. 28, occurs elsewhere in the New Testament only in James iii. 9. The phrase 'to give praise to God' is found only in Luke xviii. 43.

We can still further justify our reference to the exuberant joy characteristic of this book. Words meaning 'exult' and 'exultation' occur in i. 14, 44, 47; x. 21—elsewhere in the Gospels only in Matt. v. 12; John v. 35; viii. 56; in 1 Peter three times; in Hebrews and Jude once each. In Luke i. 41, 44, vi. 23, moreover, we have 'leap' for joy—but nowhere else in the New Testament. The story of the lost son gives us 'music'—really the 'symphony,' now called in the east 'sampoon,' a musical instrument something like the bagpipes—'and dancing.' In this chapter too we have merriment in vv. 23, 24, 32. The words 'rejoice' and 'joy' occur nineteen times in Luke's Gospel, as against twenty-six times in the other Synoptics taken together, or twenty-three times if the places where one of these words is used in mockery are left out of consideration, 'rejoice with' only in Luke xv. 6, 9 in all four Gospels. The 'shepherd rejoices' over the sheep, the 'woman' over her recovered coin, but actual merriment or *home-joy* comes in along with the less brightly coloured word only when a lost son is concerned. There is, too, a rising note—'joy in heaven' (v. 7), 'joy in the presence of the angels'—a reverent Jewish way of saying 'in God's heart' (v. 10)—merriment, social joy, in which God and we can join. 'Laugh,' in the simple form of the Greek verb, occurs here only in the New Testament; it is the proper antithesis to the Lucan 'crying.' The key-note of the Gospel is praise; even the 'stones will shout' when Jesus comes to His own (Luke only—cf. iii. 8).

The Literature of St. Luke's Gospel.

1. *Books and Articles* on the Life of Christ and on the Synoptics have to be read, but do not need to be given here.

2. *Articles in the Dictionaries.*—The article in *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible* is by Ll. J. M. Bebb; in the *Single-volume Dictionary* by A. J. Maclean; and in the *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels* by Arthur Wright. In the *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church,* K. Lake deals with the Gospel in his article on St. Luke. In the *Encyclopædia Biblica* the article is by P. W. Schmiedel. The writers in the smaller dictionaries are: in the *Standard Bible Dictionary,* M. W. Jacobus; in Murray's *Illustrated Bible Dictionary,* Leighton Pullan; in the *Temple Dictionary,* James Iverach. Bebb was strongly recommended by Sanday, but he never secured the place in literature which he deserved. Bishop Maclean is a most conscientious worker; his range of knowledge is as surprising as its minute accuracy. Arthur Wright has made the Gospel of Luke his life-long study and writes from an independent point of view, being an advocate of the oral theory. Schmiedel is not so glaringly out of touch with British scholarship in this article as in other work of his. The other authors are all reliable scholars and differ greatly in training and environment, Jacobus being a graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary, Pullan a member of the High Church party of the Church of England, while Iverach was Principal of one of the Colleges of the United Free Church of Scotland.

3. *Introductions.*—In his *Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament* (Intern. Theol. Library) J. Moffatt gives all the facts, discusses most of the problems, and refers to the greater part of the literature. Two Introductions, more radically critical, are A. Jülicher's *An Introduction to the New Testament* (translated by J. P. Ward), and J. E. Carpenter's *The First Three Gospels.* More conservative is Theodor Zahn's *Introduction to the New Testament.* A book by Fr. Blass, with its unfortunate title *Philology of the Gospels* discusses Luke's date and method of

writing; and two articles by him in Latin in *Hermathena* (nos. xxi. and xxii., 1895 and 1896) may be looked at. The sources of Luke are carefully examined by E. W. Lummis in *How Luke was written* (1915), and by J. R. Cohu in *The Gospels and Modern Research* (1909); see also the trans. of Wernle's *The Sources of our Knowledge of the Life of Jesus* (1907), Armitage Robinson's *Study of the Gospels* (1902), Holdsworth's *Gospel Origins* (1913), and especially Burkitt's *Earlier Sources for the Life of Jesus* (1910), with its bibliography. There is a good popular Introduction to St. Luke's Gospel by Shailer Mathews in *The Biblical World* for May and June 1895. Leighton Pullan's chapter in *The Books of the New Testament* agrees with his article in *Murray's Dictionary*. He writes more fully in *The Gospels* (1912). The section on St. Luke in V. H. Stanton's *The Gospels as Historical Documents,* Part II. (1909), is free from bias and reliable, as is all Stanton's work. F. C. Burkitt takes Luke and Matthew together in his important book, *The Gospel History and its Transmission* (1906). There are two articles by E. D. Burton on 'The Purpose and Plan of the Gospel of Luke' in the *Biblical World* (Oct., Nov. 1900). E. W. Parsons has published *A Historical Examination of Some Non-Markan Elements in Luke* (1914). Dawson Walker writes on 'The Date of St. Luke and Acts' in *The Gift of Tongues* (1906), and Arthur Wright discusses 'St. Luke's Travel Narrative' (Luke ix. 51—xviii. 14) in *Some New Testament Problems* (1898).

4. *Characteristics.*—The general characteristics of Luke's Gospel are given by Archbishop Alexander in *The Leading Ideas of the Gospels* (3rd ed., 1898); and by Luckock, *The Special Characteristics of the Four Gospels* (1900). There is a good chapter in Knapp, as also in Maurice Jones, *The Four Gospels*. These may be supplemented by Walpole, Burnside, Stevenson, and especially Findlay. Hayes' *The Most Beautiful Book ever Written* (1913) is very full and very enthusiastic. Harnack's book on *Luke the Physician* (1907) has been criticised, but that Luke was a physician is generally accepted as a fact (see 'The Medical Language of St. Luke and Recent Criticism' in R. J. Knowling's *Messianic Interpretation* [1910]); and characteristics due to it are found in the Gospel, by Alexander, Luckock, Hayes, Fisher (*The Four Gospels* [1899]), and many other writers.

5. *Commentaries.*—Nearly all the Commentaries contain Introductions to be added to the formal list above. On the Greek text the Commentary by A. Plummer (2nd ed. 1898) is the most thorough and most useful, though A. B. Bruce's in *The Expositor's Greek Testament* (1897) must be consulted for its suggestiveness. A convenient and excellent edition (using Westcott and Hort's text) is W. F. Burnside's (1913). A handsome edition of the Greek text for students is by Arthur Wright—*St. Luke's Gospel in Greek* (1900). Of commentaries on the English text the oldest that need be mentioned are F. W. Farrar's in the *Cambridge Bible* and E. H. Plumptre's in *Ellicott's New Testament Commentary*. There are many school and Bible Class editions, the most useful being T. M. Lindsay's (1887), Morley Stevenson's (1901), A. S. Walpole's (1910), C. Knapp's (1917), and A. R. Whitham's (1919). In the *Century Bible* St. Luke is edited by W. F. Adeney; in *Peake's Commentary* on the Bible by A. J. Grieve.

6. *Expository and Devotional.*—Of expository works Godet's commentary (1875) is still worth reading. In the Expositor's Bible *St. Luke* (1890) is done by H. Burton. C. G. Montefiore's *Synoptic Gospels* (1909) is a Jew's critical but appreciative exposition with introduction. J. A. Findlay's *Jesus as They Saw Him* (1919) is a useful book for teachers; Part II. deals with St. Luke. Specially prepared for Study Circles is Hugh Martin's *According to St. Luke* (1917). The best devotional book is by J. M. E. Ross, in *Buckland's Devotional Commentary* (1921).

For elementary work Walpole may be commended; for more advanced Knapp. The Greek Student's Library might consist of Burnside for a beginning; afterwards Wright's arrangement of the Westcott and Hort text, with Plummer for interpretation and Moffatt for introduction. The preacher will find Ross most helpful, but Bruce and Findlay are fresh and stimulating, and Montefiore should be read.

The literature on St. Luke himself is given fully in *The Greater Men and Women of the Bible.*

Certainty.

Luke i. 4.—'That thou mightest know the certainty.'

THE Evangelist distinguishes between what we now term certitude, or the belief of the mind, and certainty, or the solid reality of the facts or truths believed in—the one an internal state, the other an external fact, fitted to be the basis of faith. He speaks of things which are 'surely believed' and then of the 'certainty' or safe reality of the things so believed in. He adds that, with the object of causing Theophilus to know (or rather thoroughly to know) this certainty, he was about to write a fresh and orderly discourse founded on the testimony of eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word of God, who could not be mistaken as to what they had seen or heard.

1. Now the books of the New Testament, from the Gospel of St. Matthew to the Apocalypse, though differing in style, object, and feeling, are marked by one characteristic—the tone of certainty which, without one single break-down into speculation or balancing of probabilities, runs through them all. The writers thoroughly believed what they wrote. This characteristic distinguishes the New Testament books, not only from all the Roman literature of the same age, but from all other Greek books that ever were written. In those literatures you have argument on both sides, guess, divination, doubt, mockery, despair. But here every page overflows with the feeling of certainty. The Evangelists and Apostles of the gospel absolutely exhaust all the language of certainty in giving expression to their ideas. There are no words expressive of absolute truth and trustworthiness which these men have not employed. 'This is the victory that hath overcome the world' of doubters—'even their faith.'

(1) There are four biographers of Christ—men of as different make as any four biographers who could be found to-day—and yet, although two of them do not claim even to write as eye-witnesses; although they write from different standpoints, and give, so to speak, pictures from four different angles, amidst all diversities of style and treatment the general spiritual result is to portray in all the Four Gospels 'the same Jesus'—that one Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, the very memory of whose sanctity has consecrated the whole land of Palestine as 'holy' because His footsteps pressed it, and who has become the spiritual Lord of the modern world. And in these four Evangelists, so differing in the details of their books, the one feature common to all is this awe-striking impression of certainty. They write as men, each one consciously telling only a part of the truth in every case, because the whole truth was too great for any one to tell. Yet, amidst all minor differences of statement as to times and places and successions of events, there prevails throughout the same calm and absolute tone of certainty as to the reality and truth of the general history.

(2) If we pass from the Four Gospels to the letters of the Apostles, including those of St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. John, what do we discover there? Precisely the same language of decisive belief based on the absolute certainty of fact and doctrine. Here again, as in our passage from St. Luke's Gospel, we find heaped up on every side all possible terms expressive of certainty and certitude. We have first the perpetually-occurring *epignosis*, that 'thorough knowledge' which is the privilege of the advanced spiritual man. In Eph. i. 17 St. Paul speaks of 'the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.' He says, (iv. 13) 'Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, . . . no longer children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.' Every Apostle plants his foot upon a rock of recent historical fact, of which he had been an eye-witness, up to the ascension of Christ; and, standing there, he has no doubt as to the reality of an immortal life to come. 'We also believe, and therefore speak.' Their faith was of the nature of knowledge. 'We know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house . . . eternal in the heavens', 'and we know,' says St. John, at the close of his First Epistle, 'that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.'

2. Now this tone of absolute assurance is pre-

sent when they speak of the facts of Christ's life, death, resurrection, and ascension; when they speak of what they call the 'doctrine' founded on those facts—the doctrine of 'the end of sins' made by sacrifice, of 'the abolition of death' by the resurrection of the Lifegiver, of our 'gratuitous justification in Christ,' of our salvation by grace, 'not of works, lest any man should boast,' of the renewing work of the Holy Spirit, or of the resurrection to eternal life. And the same tone of certainty is present in those expressions which describe their own personal assurance of forgiveness, of salvation, of enjoying the present and everlasting favour of God. Look where you will, you cannot discover a line, a word, a syllable, of uncertain or less certain utterance. The trumpet always gives a 'certain sound' and it is the sound which proclaims the presence in the host of the Conqueror of Death.

The more closely this tone of certainty is studied the more soul-striking the phenomenon becomes, both in its substance and in its accessories. What led these four Evangelists, and these writers of the letters on doctrine and life, to speak, one and all, in this uniform style of intense belief? Was it an appearance of certainty, covering knowledge to the contrary? This implies deliberate imposture; but in all ages men have revolted from charging deliberate conspiracy and imposture on the writers of the New Testament. They at least believed what they wrote. They seem utterly regardless of calumny and misrepresentation, like men who know that they are right; and they speak with a strength of persuasion and assertion which still moves the world. Were they deceived by appearances, and gradually led to attach a supernatural character to natural events, or to mere idle reports?—as Renan thinks the story of Christ's resurrection from the dead is to be accounted for by a passionate dream of Mary Magdalene. It is just conceivable that one distempered mind might rest faith on such a dream, but that a whole band of men, of different types of mind, should steadily rest absolute faith such as theirs in a risen Jesus on no other foundation than one woman's fancy is impossible, much more that they should lay down their lives in support of it. No, that which they had seen with their own eyes, which they had heard, which they had looked upon, and their own hands had handled, of the (risen) Word of Life declared they unto us, that we might have fellowship with them, and through them with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

¶ 'Now with regard to M. Renan's theory. People who are subject to visions and hallucinations *believe in* and *expect them*. A person who has an hallucination that he is being followed about *believes* in the existence of these followers and also *expects* to see them: and then he does seem to see them: his own brain conjures them up before him.

We know that St. Mary Magdalene did not believe in the Resurrection when she went to the tomb with the other women—for they took spices with them to anoint the Body. Even when they found the empty grave the thought of the Resurrection did not occur to them. And even when St. M. Magdalene beheld the Lord she did not know Him. A *visionary* would have recognised the subject of his vision *at once*. Exactly the same must be said of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. The Eleven at Jerusalem were at first terrified and thought they saw a spirit. Here is no belief, no expectancy, such as is essential to the vision theory. There was also no *excitement*, no tension of feeling. The disciples were depressed—they were in low spirits: 'We hoped that it was he who should have redeemed Israel' (Luke xxiv. 21), that was their state of mind—not surely the hysterical, unbalanced, excitable state of mind which would produce hallucination; but sorrowful, almost hopeless and despairing.' [1]

¶ 'The career of Jesus, His followers believe, did not terminate at the Cross: it was perpetuated, in a changed and universalised form, by His resurrection from the dead. This element in the Gospel is cardinal. The first followers of Jesus took it as their vocation to be witnesses to this resurrection, and, to be exact, it was not Jesus of Nazareth, but the Risen Lord, in whom they faced and overcame the world.' [2]

The Certainty of the Gospel Story.

Luke i. 4.—'The certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.'

WHAT things? The teaching given to catechumens. At first it was thought sufficient to impart

[1] E. Romanes, *The Story of an English Sister*, 99

[2] H. R. Mackintosh, *The Originality of the Christian Message*, 87.

certain facts by word of mouth to converts who sought for Christian baptism; they were orally instructed in the story of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But oral teaching cannot rise to the 'certainty' of the written document; it lacks the precision of the latter, and it does not inspire equal confidence. The Church soon began to feel the need of memoirs of the events on which her faith and hope were based, and the Synoptic Gospels, as the first three of our Gospels are called, were among the early attempts made to supply this want.

When the idea of writing apostolic memoirs had once taken hold of the Church there was no lack of writers. Many took in hand to 'draw up a narrative' of the gospel history. Of these written 'Gospels,' as they soon came to be called, the Church accepted four only as authoritative. They are the four which we read to-day. Although no copy of our Gospels now exists which is older than the fourth century, yet they are so largely quoted by Christian writers from the middle of the second century onwards that there cannot be the slightest doubt of the substantial identity of our books with those that were read in the great centres of early Christian life, at Rome and at Lyons, at Carthage and at Alexandria.

Can these Gospels be trusted? Has St. Luke given us certainty concerning these things?

1. In the first place, the Christian faith does not stand or fall with the trustworthiness of the Gospels. If it could be proved that the Gospels were the work of the second century, and of little value as historical documents, the Church would have lost one line of defence; but others would remain. The gospel was preached to the world before a single Gospel was written, and the gospel would continue to be preached if all the written Gospels were discredited or destroyed. There would remain the witness of the Church and the Sacraments; there would remain the witness of the Spirit of Christ in the individual life; 'he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.' There would remain also the work of Christ in the world, and the *gesta Christi*, the great effects wrought by Christianity upon the world, which have raised modern life, with all its faults, so immeasurably above the standard of purity attained by Greece and Rome. The men who think that they strike a deadly blow at Christianity by casting doubt on the Gospels altogether miscalculate the strength of the Christian position. Nevertheless, they are capable of inflicting grievous injury upon those who are influenced by their representations. Such persons often cast away, together with their faith in the Gospels, all belief in the supreme claim of Christ; or at best, Christ becomes for them a mere symbol for vague and uncertain ideals of goodness. Never was it more imperative that Christians should possess a definite faith resting on a sure foundation of fact. This is an age of rapid change, of transition from the old order to a new; all knowledge is called in question; all beliefs go into the crucible of an exacting, yet often hasty and imperfect, analysis. In religion, at least, we need to feel the ground under our feet; we must have, if not certainty, yet such relative security as the nature of the case allows. It was in order that the Church might for all time possess that security that the Gospels were written.

2. Let us test them on points where we can test their trustworthiness. They spread before us a large canvas covered with scenes taken from the life of the time and country in which our Lord moved. This life was peculiarly complex. Take a single instance. From Capernaum to Jerusalem the distance is but eighty miles, as the bird flies; yet in passing from one place to another the Lord and His disciples came under another form of government, and the physical, social, and religious conditions were also changed in many important particulars. This variety of circumstances is depicted by the Evangelists with great minuteness, not in introductory chapters or separate paragraphs, but unartificially, and as a part of the story. Incidental references of this kind expose a writer to numerous pitfalls, unless he is either a contemporary and has been on the spot, or has made himself intimately acquainted with the age and country of which he writes. But the scrutiny of generations of scholars has failed to detect anachronisms or other blunders in the allusions which the Gospels make to the immediate surroundings of the Ministry and Passion. Here and there statements as to points of history and chronology have been challenged; but the local colouring, the references to strictly contemporary events,

the numerous side-glances at politics and the religious questions of the day are, so far as they can be tested, true and exact. The state of things which they describe is that of the time of Christ, not that of the time of the writers; and this impression is deepened by every fresh reading of the books.

3. Can the Gospels be equally trusted when they draw the picture of their central character? Is the Christ, as they portray Him, an historic person, or is He the creation of the Evangelists, or of their apostolic predecessors? It is not uncommon for disciples to glorify their master when he is gone, until their loyal appreciation grows into a cult, and a false lustre is shed upon words or deeds which do not rise above ordinary standards. May not something of this kind have occurred in reference to the Synoptic portraiture of Christ? May it not be a glorified image of Jesus of Nazareth, and not a true likeness of His very self? Such a view may plausibly be taken of the presentation of Christ in the Fourth Gospel, or in the Epistles of St. Paul; but it will not bear examination in connection with the Synoptic Gospels. The Synoptic Christ calls Himself 'the Son of man,' a name which is but once or twice given to Him by His followers. He reveals His Messiahship only by degrees, and not publicly until just before the end. He lives with the Twelve on terms of intimacy; Peter once even ventures to rebuke Him. His Transfiguration is the one occasion on which His superhuman glory is revealed, and the three witnesses are forbidden to speak of it during His lifetime. He is 'meek and lowly in heart'; He is at home with poor folk and little children; He sends the rich empty away. Adoration is rarely offered to Him; He does not even accept the title of 'Good Master,' without protesting against a possible misapprehension. This is not such a conception of Christ as could have originated in the Apostolic age. Still less was it suggested by Jewish expectations. A Messiah who refused a crown, who lived the life of an itinerant teacher, who suffered the death of the Cross, was not such a Messiah as any Jew of the time looked for or desired. Whence, then, came the picture of the Christ which the three Synoptic Gospels consistently offer? There is no escape from the conclusion that it was drawn from life. The Central Figure of the gospel story, no less than the surroundings, bears the stamp of truth.

4. But the Gospels contain the record of miracles. Does that not more than counterbalance all that can be said for the credibility of the Gospels? They are undoubtedly full of the miraculous, and the miraculous, it is widely assumed, cannot be historically true. This objection is not to be met by an attempt to weed out the miracles of the Gospels from the rest of the history. The miracles of the Gospels are not an accretion which may be removed by critical processes, but a thread which runs through the whole tissue of the narrative. Nor is there the slightest reason for supposing that the story was ever non-miraculous. The earliest of our Gospels, St. Mark, is not less deeply impregnated with the supernatural than the other two, and no ingenuity can purge it of miracles. If, then, miracles are under no circumstances credible, the Gospels, notwithstanding all that has been said or can be said on their behalf, must be pronounced unhistorical, so far as they relate miraculous events. But are miracles incredible under the circumstances which the Gospels presuppose? The life which they describe is confessedly unique in the history of man; the Personality has no equal. In purity, in majesty, in strength, in sweetness, in love, Christ stands alone and unapproachable; His character is altogether beyond our experience; it is human, and yet superhuman; there is in it that which corresponds with our idea of the Divine. Consider whether the wonders which the Gospels attribute to the Person of Christ are not consistent with their presentation of His life. Realize, if you can, the Christ-life; place yourself in its presence, and then ask whether it still seems to you unnatural that this Man should still storms and walk on waves and raise the dead. Both the character and the works are supernatural, that is, they are equally beyond experience; but they are consistent, they are of a piece; they form a dramatic unity which cannot be broken. The character, it will be admitted, is historical; it could not have been imagined. As little could miracles such as Jesus is said to have wrought have been imagined by the men of His generation; what signs of Messiahship or of Godhead they would have devised may be seen by comparing the miracles of the Apocryphal Gospels

with those of the Synoptics. The Synoptic miracles display a dignity, a reserve of power, a purpose of love, a didactic aim which are in harmony with the character of Christ, and cannot fail to impress the reader who comes to them with an open mind.

Jesus Christ Himself is the very greatest miracle of the gospel. Granting this, believing this, accepting this, then all the other miracles follow as a matter of course. It would be out of scale, out of reason, that One so born, Very God, the Son of God, Very Man, the Son of Mary, that One so born on this earth should not do miracles. His very walk on this earth was a miracle, His words are miracles, His miracles are parables, His parables are miracles; His life is efficacious for example, and His Death is all-efficacious for salvation.

Certainty and Witness.

Luke i. 4.—'That thou mightest know the certainty concer ning the things wherein thou wast instructed.'

If you compare the way in which Christianity was spoken of last century with the way in which it is spoken of in this century, you will observe a difference. Some even of the best Christians of last century were in the habit of treating the characteristic Christian doctrines as mysteries. They were to be received because of the testimony of prophecy, of miracles, and of history. But it seems hardly ever to have occurred to these defenders of the Christian faith that these truths were meant to be known. It hardly seems to have dawned upon the minds of some whose names will live in our literature as thinkers and scholars that what to some of us are the very truths by which we daily live, without which we could not live, were intended to be the common food of spiritual life. They laid stress upon prophecy, they laid stress upon miracles, to persuade men to accept Christianity, largely, if not wholly, ignoring the self-evidencing power of Christianity itself.

Now, God intends the various truths of the Christian faith to be known, appreciated, and obeyed by the simplest and plainest and humblest of men and women. Science is adding every day to our knowledge of the more minute structure of the body and brain, and of their functions. To-day, regarding the use of the various parts of the eye and ear, science is endeavouring to solve problems which twenty-five or fifty years ago baffled the researches of all our scientific men. There is still difference of opinion on many points, but on one point there is perfect unanimity—that these bodies have functions and that it is only our ignorance that precludes us from recognizing these functions. The same thing is true in theology. If there be any truth which is not to you a living truth of God, a truth incorporated into your very heart and life, woven into the very texture of your existence, it is not because the truth cannot be known, but because you have not known it. God means you to acquire it, and will enable you to acquire it if you employ suitable methods. How many of us know that God exists? How many of us live with God, have daily fellowship with God, talk daily to God, hear daily the voice of God, obey daily the commands of God? Erskine of Linlathen once accosted a shepherd on one of the Highland hills and said to him, 'Do you know the Father?' and passed on. Years after he encountered the same shepherd, and the shepherd approached Erskine, and said, 'I know the Father.' 'God is good, God is good,' murmured Cromwell as he lay upon his deathbed. Erskine knew the Fatherhood of God; Cromwell knew the goodness of God.

What these men attained you can also attain. Truth is not the possession of the powerful intellect, but of a loyal, reverent, obedient heart and will. Select any truth you please; that truth is meant to be real and living in your experience, and it has not discharged its function in the economy of God, is not to you what it should be, until, not merely in theory but in practice, you acknowledge it to be true, and from your own personal history know it to be true. If, then, the chief end of religion be action, conduct, righteousness, and if we are capable of acting as we should through the presence of the spirit of God, and if God enables us to verify the truths of God by means of obedience, and if every truth of God is intended to be known in order that it may be done, and done in order that it may be still more fully known, what is the duty—the immediate, the urgent, the imperative duty—of all Christians? Do you offer a timid apology for your Christianity? Do you hang your head because you are a Christian? Will

you speak feebly, will you pause and hesitate, when men ask you whether you are a Christian? Is this worthy of those who profess their faith in a religion that is of God? Is this the tone, this the speech, of men who know that their feet are upon a rock, that the rock upon which their feet rest is the Rock of Ages, Jesus Christ? What we need to be is men and women who boldly, resolutely, and hopefully avow our Christian convictions, and seek, with all the energy at our command, to advance the Kingdom of God. We must be humble, modest, tolerant, magnanimous, but we must likewise be fearless men and women, who speak what they know, who are aware that whatever they assert can stand the most searching scrutiny, and who desire their assertions to be subjected to such scrutiny, knowing that every truth they express is a part of the moral order of the universe, an element of the life of God Himself.

What thou of God and of thyself dost know,
So know that none can force thee to forego;
For oh! his knowledge is a worthless art,
Which, forming of himself no vital part,
The foremost man he meets with readier skill
In sleight of words, can rob him of at will.
Faith feels not of *her* lore more sure nor less,
If all the world deny it or confess:
Did the whole world exclaim, 'Like Solomon,
Thou sittest high on Wisdom's noblest throne',
She would not, than before, be surer then,
Nor draw more courage from the assent of men.
Or did the whole world cry, 'O fond and vain!
What idle dream is this which haunts thy brain?'
To the whole world Faith boldly would reply,
'The whole world can, but I can never, lie.' [1]

A Righteous Household.

Luke i. 6.—'And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.'

We have here a beautiful outline picture of a quiet home in the hill country. The husband and wife were both of priestly descent, and in their modest lives, away among the hills, were lovely types of Old Testament godliness. That they are pronounced 'blameless' militates against no doctrine of universal sinfulness. It is not to be taken as dogma at all, but as the expression of God's merciful estimate of His servants' characters. These two simple saints lived, as all married believers should do, yoked together in the sweet exercise of godliness, and helping each other to all high and noble things. Hideous corruption of wedlock reigned round them. Such profanations of it as were shown later by Herod and Herodias, Agrippa and Bernice, were only too common; but in that quiet nook these two dwelt 'as heirs together of the grace of life,' and their prayers were not hindered.

1. Theirs was a *genuine* piety—'they were righteous before God.' These words give them a noble commendation. The word of God does not hesitate to give the due meed of praise to genuine worth. Their righteousness was not like that of the Pharisees, merely outward and before men; it was before the Omniscient God. They were sincerely pious within and without. The reference is especially to their strict observance of the Law, as is afterwards implied. Doubtless there was an acknowledgment of sin by them when it was committed, and a hearty striving against the repetition of the sinful act or thought. It is a high commendation, indeed, that the inspired writer gives them when he affirms that they were righteous before God.

2. Theirs was a *mutual* piety—they were both righteous before God. They were not unequally yoked together; their harmony in their religious faith was a signal mercy to both. It is a blessed thing when those who are joined together in marriage are also joined to the Lord. It is difficult to understand how a woman who has given her heart to the Christ can really give her hand to a man who rejects the Christ. It is difficult to see how she can be loyal to her Lord and be loving towards a man who hates that Lord. How can light have fellowship with darkness? A man who is struggling heavenward, while his wife lives for this life alone, is like a bird trying to fly with but one wing. It is impossible that a man and a woman united in the bonds of matrimony should not influence each other for good or for evil.

¶ Of Mr. Gladstone and his wife it is written: 'Diverse as they were in character and tempera-

[1] R. C. Trench

ment, what was the secret of their abiding love for one another, their joy through a span of life nearly twenty years longer than that usually allotted to man?

'They were moved by the same ardour to gather the very best, the richest out of life. To them life was not a thing to be idled and pleasured away; it was a sacred trust that implied true and laudable service to God and man. They lifted it to a new level. . . . To both of them religion was the master-key of life. Mr. Gladstone never thought of the Church but as the soul of the State. In every act the religious motive was predominant. In everything he thought, said, and did, he took for granted that right and wrong depended on the same principles in public as in private life. It has been truly said, "He lived and wrought in the sunlight."

'While he laboured inside and outside the walls of Parliament to lighten the burdens of those least fitted to bear them, she used her gifts and graces in strengthening and sweetening and purifying the sad, the lonely, the sinful, the suffering, whether poor or rich, weak or powerful; with both hands she gave her love, her strength, her pity, her succour, to those who needed them.

'It has been said of him, "He so lived and wrought that he kept the soul alive in England." And if he kept the soul, she kept the heart alive. In truth, the secret lay in their devotion to Him, "Whose service is perfect freedom."'[1]

3. Theirs was a *practical* piety—'walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.' Walking is that movement of the body by which it changes its place and performs its daily duty. In the Christian life this act stands for the trend, the tendency, the actuality, the totality of life. When it is said that Enoch walked with God we have a comprehensive statement of the controlling motive and practical characteristic of his entire life. Our religion must be one which manifests itself in our daily walk and conversation. Like the vestal fire, it must be a light which is never extinguished. There is an irresistible power in such a religion. You can no more lessen its influence by opposition than you can blot out the sun by denying its existence. Quaintly has it been said that the Christian has first to make a good profession and then he has to make his profession good. Two men read a Christian's life for every man who reads the Christian's Bible.

¶ At Peshâwur there was a man who had lived in Sir Herbert's service all the years that he had been in India—having been his bhestie, or water-carrier, in the early years, when he was a subaltern with his regiment at Subâthoo. He was a most faithful servant—a Mohammedan.

The news of Sir Herbert's death, when it reached Peshâwur, greatly affected him. He came to the missionaries and asked if it were true, and said, 'I have heard that there is *another* Sir Herbert Edwardes in England. Is it not possible that if may *not* be *my* sahib who is dead?'

The missionaries told him it was indeed too true.

Khummah then said, 'I have lived with Sir Herbert all the years he has been in India, and I have followed him everywhere. My master was *such* a good man! I have seen him in all scenes and under all circumstances, and I have never seen him make a mistake. He can't have made a mistake in his religion. Will you teach me his religion? for I should like to believe what he believed.'[1]

4. Theirs was a *blameless* piety—'walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.' This we do not take to mean that they were sinless; the 20th verse of this chapter clearly shows that they were not sinless; Zacharias was guilty of unbelief. But this commendation shows that they were exemplary observers of God's Law. It also teaches us that their character was irreproachable, and that they would not knowingly and willingly indulge in sin. Doubtless they strove to have consciences void of offence toward God and toward man. We cannot always be without blame. If we have positive elements in our character we will provoke antagonism and arouse hostility. As far as possible we are to live peaceably with all men and in the enjoyment of the reputation of being 'blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke.' It will not, however, be possible always so to live as to escape sharp criticism. We may, however, live lives of such transparent sincerity as to make opposition powerless, and the arrows of criticism pointless.

[1] M. Drew, *Catherine Gladstone*, 239.

[1] *Memorials of the Life and Letters of Major-General Sir Herbert B. Edwardes*, ii. 465.

¶ Beautiful is the prayer of the Apostle for the Philippians, when he prays that they 'may be sincere and without offence.' This prayer implies that they would not willingly injure others in property or in reputation. The word translated 'sincere' in this connection is an unusually suggestive one. The word 'sincere' is not the direct translation, but it also is worthy of our thought; it means 'without wax' and is applied to honey which is pure and transparent, or to furniture which is without cracks and knot-holes filled with wax. This is a beautiful description of Christian character. But the word 'sincere' does not correctly translate the original word in this prayer on behalf of the Philippians. The Greek word properly means that which is judged of in the sunshine. An article in a dark room may appear flawless and perfect, but when exposed to bright sunshine its defects will appear. This is a prayer that a Christian's life may be so perfect that it may be judged in the brightest sunshine of daily publicity. Sincerity of this character means far more than the mere absence of criticism; it has its positive elements. But when a life is thus sincere it will soon disarm hostile criticism, and compel general respect and appreciation.[1]

A Multitude at Prayer.

Luke i. 10.—'And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the hour of incense.'

THERE can be no doubt that, at the time of Christ, public prayer occupied a very prominent place in the ordinary daily services of the Temple. In general the Rabbis distinguish two elements in prayer—thanksgiving and petition. To these correspond the two kinds of early Jewish prayer: the Eulogies and the Tephillah. And thus far correctly, as the two Hebrew words for prayer indicate, the one adoration, the other supplication, or rather, intercession. Both kinds of prayer found expression in the Temple services. But only after the manifestation of Him who in His person united the Divine with the human nature could adoration and supplication be fully called out. Nay, the idea of supplication would only be properly realized after the outpouring of the Spirit of adoption, whereby the people of God also became the children of God. Hence it is not correct to designate sacrifices as 'prayers without words.' The sacrifices were in no sense prayers, but rather the preparation for prayer. The Tabernacle was, as its Hebrew designation shows, a place 'of meeting' between God and Israel; the sacrificial service, that which made such meeting possible; and the priest (as the root of the word implies), he who brought Israel near to God. Hence prayer could only follow after the sacrifice; and its appropriate symbol and time was the burning of incense.

One of the assistants reverently spread the coals on the golden altar; the other arranged the incense; and then the chief officiating priest was left alone within the Holy Place, to await the signal of the president before burning the incense. It was probably while Zacharias was thus expectant that Gabriel appeared to him. As the president gave the word of command, which marked that 'the time of incense had come,' 'the whole multitude of the people without' withdrew from the inner court, and fell down before the Lord, spreading their hands in silent prayer.

1. Are we using the devotional power of the Church in due proportion to its other powers? In laying our plans, whether for our private religious regulation and personal growth in holiness or for the public advancement of Christ's Kingdom, are we looking directly enough and constantly enough to God? In shaping and starting new measures, even for the Church's honour and for saving men, do we go first, and go most confidently, and go continually, to Him whose presence is our only life, and whose favouring will, in every Christian movement, is the only moving force? In our individual self-discipline, when we are depressed with a sense that all is not going well with us when a providence suddenly reveals the wrong direction in which our habits have been gradually and almost imperceptibly deflecting; when the heart seems frozen, the senses leprous, faith sleeping, and we wonder what is the matter—do we take that question straight to the Holy Spirit as readily as we ask it of ourselves? If in any of our undertakings we fail, there is very little doubt that we fail because we did not expect enough and ask enough of God—for that expectation is only another name for faith; and that asking is prayer.

2. The next step follows irresistibly. Every

[1] R. S. MacArthur, *Divine Balustrades*, 131.

movement of religious life among us must get its power and direction from the Spirit of God. Every contrivance of ecclesiastical or parochial wisdom, of energy, even of piety, is nothing but a making ready for this Spirit. We may try other things, as we certainly do, and may try them with the best intentions. We call people together, form societies, write constitutions for them with rules and by-laws, devise and discuss measures, publish statistics, secure an incorporation perhaps, send for the ablest speakers, collect money, and when the institution is thoroughly organized and built, we look at it and watch its working. It is all done in the interest and for the sake of some Christian truth or charity. But the amount of spiritual product is exactly in proportion to the coming into all this apparatus of that living Spirit of God—the love of the Father, the grace of Christ, the fellowship of the Holy Ghost. And the degree of that coming and power, again, will be exactly in proportion to the fervency and the frequency of prayers that are offered by believers around it.

In his *Autobiography*[1] Dr. Horton gives us a striking example of the efficacy of prayer in the life of the Church. Speaking of Lyndhurst Road he says: 'The opening of the new church had been prepared for by a week of early morning meetings (from 7.15 to 7.45) for prayer. This became an annual institution. Ever since, in the corresponding week of July, the people have gathered morning by morning in large numbers to pray for the Church and the work. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord," has been the fundamental idea. The meeting for prayer every Saturday evening has been similarly sustained. And my own irrefragable argument for the reality and power of prayer lies in what prayer has accomplished at Lyndhurst Road. That week of prayer annually, and that hour of prayer weekly, to one who sees the course of things extended over many years, furnish the explanation of all that has been accomplished. We know at Lyndhurst Road, and those who do not discover it never become incorporated in the life of the Church, that Christ in the midst fulfilling His promise and gaining for us the answer to our prayers has maintained us all these years and enabled us to do whatever has been done.'

[1] P. 67.

3. A lingering doubt casts up its faithless suggestion at these words: 'Is not the Church constantly praying? Yet where is the fulfilment of the promise?' The answer is found under another word, 'the prayers of faith.' We may be sure that the measure of the faith is the measure of the power of the prayer, and that the measure of such is, sooner or later, the measure of the blessing we receive. We very often mistake the strength of our desire for the strength of our faith. Besides, faith is a general quality of the whole soul in all its acts and aspects towards the Saviour, and pertains to its habitual attitude; it is not a mere sudden, special expectation of having some greatly-wanted boon granted. It is, for the most part, a grace of slow, patient, and silent growth. Most of us, in our common moods, scarcely touch the rim of its great depth of meaning, or taste of its incalculable peace. It is true just as it stands: 'According to your faith,' in asking, 'be it unto you.' It is true of our private conflicts with the tempter, our struggles with ourselves, our resistance of the sins that most easily beset us, our fight with temper and pride and indolence and luxury. Spiritual victory and progress will be gained on our knees, by looking up and saying, 'Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.' Zacharias saw the vision of the angel, beside the altar of incense, before the veil. To us Christians the veil is rent asunder. The Holy of Holies is thrown open. The Saviour whom the types foretold is come. And now, 'if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous,' who 'ever liveth to make intercession for' us—the High Priest, tempted here as we are, yet sinless; needing not to make sacrifice for His own sins, yet touched with the feeling of our every infirmity, and Himself our sacrifice.

The Quiet in the Land.

Luke i. 13.—'Thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son.'

THE Gospels make us familiar with the adversaries of Jesus, and with the outcasts whom He came to seek and save; but we think too little of 'the quiet in the land,' the men and women, like the parents of John the Baptist, in whom genuine and beautiful Old Testament piety survived. We see here their devout God-fearing lives, their

family disappointments, and the high hopes they cherished of what God was going to do for their nation. Zacharias and Elisabeth lived in a little highland village south of Jerusalem, and in their old age, when they had given up hopes of their own, they still lifted up their hearts to what God had promised to Israel. This is what we must understand by the angel's words to Zacharias in the Temple: 'Thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son.' On the solemn occasion on which he presented the nation's prayer to God it is not likely that Zacharias's mind was concentrated on his own desire to perpetuate his family; it is far more natural to suppose that he was praying for the coming of God's Kingdom to Israel, and that there was revealed to him not only that its coming was at hand, but that a child of his own should have the signal honour of preparing Israel for its coming.

1. One lesson which is charmingly taught by this story is that there are good people in the worst of times. It is in the cycle of stories with which the birth of Christ is surrounded—and along with them we reckon the incidents connected with the birth of the Baptist—that we obtain by far the most vivid glimpses of the best section of Jewish society in that age—*die Stillen im Lande,* who were waiting for the consolation of Israel. Indeed, without this portion of the evangelic records we should have hardly any clear information about these hidden ones and their state of mind. Yet they were essential to the rise and spread of Christianity; and now that we have the records we can see that they describe them exactly as they must have been. It was an evil time. The people of God had sunk very low both in character and in fortune. It was the darkest hour which occurs just before the dawn. The nation was enslaved to the Roman power; and its own princes, of dubious origin, were the exact reverse of the ideals of the nation's prime. The Pharisee and the Sadducee occupied the high places of religion—the one, as scribe, ruling in the synagogue, the other, as priest, ruling in the Temple. Life on the outside was thickly plastered over with pious rules and practices, but on the inside it was full of dead men's bones. The publican, the sinner, and the harlot flaunted their vices in the eyes of all; and the bitter critics of these abandoned classes practised the same sins in their hearts. Even as one reads the body of the Gospels, the impression one receives is that, till Christ came and converted a few, piety was extinct. But this impression is corrected by these stories of the childhood of Jesus. As in the days of Elijah, when the great prophet complained that he was left alone in the land, his countrymen having in a body gone over to idolatry, God was able to inform him that there were seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal, so in this dark age, there were scattered saints in every part of the land—Elisabeths, Josephs, Maries, Simeons, Annas—who were keeping the fire of true religion unextinguished. Even in the Temple—the focus of evil—a man was to be found like Zacharias, who, when he had come up to Jerusalem in the order of his course to fulfil the office of priesthood, and when he was chosen by lot to burn incense—the sign that the prayers of Israel were ascending to heaven at the hour of prayer—did not merely perform the ceremony, but accompanied the mechanical act with such fervent intercessions that an archangel was sent from heaven to assure him that his prayers were heard.

Not only are there good people in the worst of times, but to them, however few and humble they may be, the future belongs. Principalities and powers may lord it over them; wickedness in high places may be contemptuous; the notorieties of the hour may dazzle them down; but those in whose hearts and in whose homes the altar-fire of truth, righteousness and piety is kept burning are the true kings, and their hour will come. Some day there will pass through their ranks from mouth to mouth the cry, 'Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder.' In these stories of the childhood of Jesus we see how, in a moment, the sadness of those who were clinging to principle and waiting for the Kingdom of God can be turned into joy, and their silence and sighing become hymns of praise. From Mary to Zacharias, from the shepherds to Simeon and Anna, the inspiration passed; and their closed lips were opened to hail the good time that had come. And this is a prophecy of that which will happen to all who live in the same attitude; for 'light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.'

2. Another lesson is the value of patient waiting upon God. There was one bitter drop in the cup of this good couple; they were childless. They had spent their long lives together in love and happiness; but their home had never been gladdened by the voice of children and the patter of their tiny feet; by the joy of their childhood, the care of their youth, and the hope of their manhood or womanhood. In their old age, no children gathered round them to repay, by their devotion, all the years of love and care expended upon their training and upbringing. No children's children gathered about them and made them young again. Apart from the personal affliction of a childless state, these good people could look forward with no hope and satisfaction to the preservation of their name and family among men. With them their name would die and their family come to an end. No sons or sons' sons would rise up in coming generations to call them blessed and preserve blameless the traditions of their honourable lives. But their deprivation did not sour them; it did not lead them to entertain hard and rebellious thoughts in their hearts toward God. They had continued in prayer for many years for two things —for the coming of the Consolation of Israel, and for a son. The time had passed, according to nature, for the answer to their personal prayer; but that did not prevent them from earnestly praying day and night for the coming of the Messiah. And now a great surprise was in store for them. A blessing that they had ceased to expect was come to their door. God was about to pension them in their old age with a dowry which would make up for all their years of leanness and disappointment. God had not forgotten their work of faith and labour of love. Their eyes were to behold the coming of the King, and their son, born to them out of the course of nature and in their old age, was to be His herald. Even so will God deal with those who are faithful and true to Him. In this world, or in the next, we shall see all the desire of our hearts fulfilled, and much more. Nothing is more certain than that God answers prayer. Only let us remember that His time and our time may not synchronize, and that He has two worlds in which to make good His promises.

Thou hast given me a heart to desire,
Thou hast given me a soul to aspire,
A spirit to question and plead;
I ask not what Thou hast decreed;
I think but of love and of need;
Thou art rich, Thou art kind, Thou art free;
What joy shall be failing to me
Whom Thou lovest? Thy smile and Thy kiss
Can give me back all that I miss;
In Thy presence is fullness of bliss:
I ask not its nature! I know
It is life, it is youth, it is love;
It is all that is wanting below,
It is all that is waiting above.[1]

3. These lessons are worth learning in times like ours. But perhaps the most interesting part of the story is that in which the angel describes the coming child. The John of our imaginations is rugged and austere, but in the eye of the angel he has a more winning aspect. His very name is winning; it means 'Jehovah is gracious.' After so long a silence God was visiting His people at last. The saying, 'Many shall rejoice at his birth,' proved true. The ministry of John, with all its threatening of the wrath to come, excited enthusiasm among his countrymen: Jesus Himself said, 'Ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light'. 'He shall be great in the sight of the Lord,' said the angel: and the coming into the world of one whom God counts great is always cause of gladness. Jesus confirmed this, too: 'Among them that are born of women,' he said, 'there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist.' He was to have the training for greatness: life-long abstinence from the intoxicating drinks which debilitate the soul. He was to have the endowment for greatness: filled with holy spirit—that is, with Divine power—from his birth. He was to do great things for Him who sent him: many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. The hardest work in the world is to make bad men good, and no man is so great as he who can really help in it. The words in verse 17—'He shall go before him'—show the greatness of John's calling. 'Before him' means 'before God.' It was God who was visiting His people when Jesus came, and John was preparing the way of the Lord. He was a new Elijah, who, like the old one, pleaded God's cause in a degenerate age, turning the heart of

[1] Dora Greenwell.

the fathers to the children—that is, reviving true family life—and making the disobedient wise and good. In all this he was making a people ready to welcome their approaching God.

Are there in our modern life men like John the Baptist—men who prepare us by their word and example for the reception of Christ? Here is the character of one, described by his son:

'To see John Brown Paton was an inspiration. To hear him was to be enriched and ennobled. Ours was a priceless privilege. To be in his presence was to enter into a new world—we were transformed by beholding him, and strengthened and purified by listening to him. Who could look at Dr. Paton without feeling that he was a saint and a seer, a scholar and a sympathising friend? Nay, a saviour of men! He was what he told his students to be—"Do not be Christians," he said, "be Christs. Let there be in you this divine passion for sacrifice to win men to your Lord. Give to Christ the full cup of life, and your full life He will fill with His own spirit. This poor human instrument may thus be filled with His power." His very face showed that Dr. Paton had this divine passion—that his life Christ had filled with Himself. His face! Words cannot adequately describe it. That look—that glow in the eye—the ecstasy of it, the invincible strength of it, the holy and tranquil calm of it! One of his maxims on sermon delivery was that "Oratory is spoken thought, not by the mouth only, but also by the face, eyes, lips, hands, and body." And of himself it could be said that rhetoric shone in his face. The kingliest and the kindliest of men—his mind, his heart, his will beamed in his eyes. He used to tell us that "a good sermon has heaven for its father and earth for its mother," and if it is permissible to adapt that statement to his own countenance we would say it portrayed both the human and the heavenly spirit that was in him. He was a good man, with a great soul. He was incapable of doing a mean or unworthy action, and he would not do a trivial thing. His own nobility came out in his words: "Do not select a trivial part," he said. "Toil nobly; toil bravely; toil greatly; and toil terribly."

'It may not be absolutely and always true that "a great man cannot do a little deed," but it is true of Dr. Paton. He could not do a little deed. He turned trifles into deeds of perfection, because of the greatness of soul he put into the humblest tasks. Charles Lamb was a favourite writer of his, and he quoted from him, "No deed of mine shall shame thee," and, after dealing very charitably with him as "the brave, gentle, Christlike hero he was," he would say for our good, "Let no deed of yours bring shame upon your sacred office; let your deeds bring delight and triumph to your Lord."'[1]

The Greatness of John the Baptist.

Luke i. 15.—'He shall be great in the sight of the Lord.'

1. THERE are two kinds of greatness. There is greatness in the sight of men and greatness in the sight of the Lord.

Many years ago in Russia there lived and reigned one of the most celebrated emperors the world has ever seen. He found his country wholly barbarous; he gave it the impulses of civilization. He found a nation altogether inland; he stretched it till it touched the seas. Leaving his country, he came to England, lodged in John Evelyn's house, worked at Deptford with his own hands as a ship carpenter, learnt how to fashion a ship, plank by plank, and rope by rope, to give his country a navy. He steered his ships with his own hands on the seas he himself had conquered; and finally, to form and found a city where no human foot had trod, where his whole people might have access to the sea, he selected a morass—a piece of wild, boggy land—and on it he built, in the short space of one year, no fewer than 30,000 houses, in a spot without timber and without stones, which were conveyed from long distances. But the price he paid for St. Petersburg was terrible, for every house had cost him three dead men—100,000 men dead in order that a city might be built, and called after his name! He was called by men Peter the Great; statues were erected to his memory; he was praised as a benefactor to his people.

Now take another picture. In a village in Northamptonshire lived a cobbler poor and hard-working, a married man and a father and burdened withal with another man's debt voluntarily undertaken. Fired by a genuine love of learning, he found time to teach himself French, Latin, Greek and Hebrew. A man also of deep religious

[1] L. Paton, *John Brown Paton*, 348.

conviction, in his daily prayers for slaves and heathen he conceived the thought, which gradually shaped itself in practical form, that he would convert the heathen world by giving them the Bible in their native tongues. He brought the subject before the assembled ministers of his persuasion, only to be silenced as a fanatic. But his enthusiasm and pertinacity were at length rewarded. In October, 1792, twelve Baptist ministers formed a society for propagating the gospel among the heathen. A few weeks later it was decided that the cobbler Carey should be sent out to Bengal with Thomas, a surgeon who had already worked in India. Thus was launched, to quote Sydney Smith's sneer, by a few 'consecrated cobblers,' the first English mission to the heathen in India. Thus Carey left England, determined never to return. The resolution cost him something. Among the seeds which, years later, he sowed in his garden in India were those of the daisy. 'I know not,' he wrote, 'that I ever enjoyed, since leaving Europe, a simple pleasure so exquisite as the sight which this English daisy afforded me; not having seen one for thirty years, and never expecting to see one again.' During his long, laborious career, thirty-four translations of the Bible were made or edited by him. He himself completed versions in four Indian tongues. His paper factories created a new industry. Not only was he one of the first of Oriental scholars, but he was a scientific botanist, an enthusiastic farmer, an ardent student of natural history. Yet with him science was always subordinated to religion. He lived to see the tone of Anglo-India society transformed, and the worst cruelties of the Hindu religion suppressed. He lived also to welcome other great missionaries to India to carry on his work.

2. John, like Carey, was great in the sight of the Lord. How is his greatness seen?

(1) It is seen in *his unwavering firmness and courage.* 'What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?' Nay! an iron pillar that stood firm whatsoever winds blew against it. This is in some true sense the basis of all moral greatness—that a man should have a grip which cannot be loosened, like that of the cuttle-fish with all its tentacles round its prey, upon the truths that dominate his being and make him a hero. 'If you want me to weep,' said the old artist-poet, 'there must be tears in your own eyes.' If you want me to believe, you yourself must be aflame with conviction which has penetrated to the very marrow of your bones. And so the first requisite, either for power upon others or for greatness in a man's own development of character, is that there shall be this unwavering firmness of grasp of clearly-apprehended truths, and unflinching boldness of devotion to them.

(2) John was great in *the utter sincerity of his consecration to the will of God.* The rugged prophet of the desert, with his scorn of the merely superficial and conventional, stands out boldly as one who never counted the cost to himself of entire faithfulness. The petty honours of the world, its fleeting smiles and frowns, concerned him not at all. A whole-souled purpose of fulfilling his mission and of declaring the Word of God to a forgetful people dominated him. His asceticism was that which must ever characterize the one who lives amid heavenly realities while dwelling among earthly needs. True greatness is a compact of utter independence and unmixed integrity.

(3) John was great in *his fiery enthusiasm for righteousness.* All through John's career there burnt unflickering and undying that steadfast light; he brought to the service of the plainest teaching of morality a fervour of passion and of zeal magnificent and almost unexampled. Jesus Christ Himself laid His hand upon this characteristic, when He said of him that 'he was a burning and a shining light.' If we keep in that tepid region of lukewarmness which is the utmost approach to tropical heat that moral and religious questions are capable of raising in many of us, good-bye to all chance of being 'great in the sight of the Lord.' 'We hear a great deal about the blessings of moderation,' the 'dangers of fanaticism,' and the like. The last thing which the moral consciousness of England wants to-day is a refrigerator; what it needs a great deal more than that is that all Christian people should be brought face to face with this plain truth—that their religion has, as an indispensable part of it, 'a spirit of burning,' and that if they have not been baptized with fire, there is little reason to believe that they have been baptized with the Holy Ghost.

3. To this greatness all men are called. In the world there are only a few places vacant where greatness can shine, only a few niches in the temple. The Valhalla has room for only a few heroes. Cemeteries in plenty there are, but only one Westminster Abbey. Celebrities must be rare from the nature of the case. There are only one or two blue ribbons in each profession. Only the few can have the outward signs of greatness, and each place filled takes away one other chance from the rest of the competitors. The many are nameless that the few may be great. But here it is different: all may be great. The success of one does not imply a less chance for others. It is rather the reverse, as the success of one is an encouragement to others. There is no limit to the places, because it is not a question of place at all. There is no lack of noble titles but a lack of claimants for them. There is room for all in this Valhalla of heroes. The calendar of saints is not nearly filled. From the worldly point of view some men are born to greatness, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them. But here all were born to be great, born to stand erect before God; and yet the greatness cannot be thrust upon us, because it is a vital thing to be wrought out in the heart and character and life between a man and God. It is not what a man has, but what he is. It is not his possessions, his reputation, his position; it is himself. There is a chief end for every man as well as for man in the mass. God has made it possible for every man to fulfil the end of his being, to be great, not as the world counts great but as He counts great.

¶ When Longfellow died, Emerson, who had been his friend for at least half a century, went to his funeral. Emerson, who was then himself aged and frail, with failing powers and his memory almost entirely lost, gave utterance to a remark pathetic for the occasion but eternally true. Looking at the coffin he said, 'The gentleman who lies there was a beautiful soul, but I have forgotten his name.' With the failing faculties which presaged his own death the recollection of a lifelong friendship summed itself up not in his name, not in his work, not in his reputation, but in the memory of what he was himself. Happy he who has so lived that when all else is forgotten, even his name, the memory of his true life can never die. His name was reckoned among earth's great ones or it was not—I have forgotten his name—but he was a beautiful soul. That is to be great in the sight of the Lord. [1]

[1] Hugh Black.

GREATNESS.

Luke i. 15.—'For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord.'

SOME of the prominent figures in history have been entitled 'the Great.' Greece had her Alexander, Rome her Julius Cæsar, Judæa her Herod. England has her Alfred, France her Charles, Germany her Frederick, while Asia can boast of her Akbar and her Tamerlane. A glance at the list is in the highest degree instructive. It reveals the emperor and the warrior as the world's ideal of greatness. In our text, on the contrary, we read of one who is called great, not by human acclamation, but by a Divine voice—great, not in the sight of men, but 'in the sight of the Lord.'

I.

What is Greatness?

This suggests the question, What is greatness? There is another question, however, which men are fonder of asking, namely, Who is greatest? The disciples asked that question, and assuredly there has never been an age, ancient or modern, never a society, barbarous or civilized, where this has not been the subject of bitter dispute. More profitable would it be to determine wherein true greatness consists, for then it would be found that much that is called great is little, and that the lowliest path leads to the summit. Vain are the strivings, vain the jealousies and emulations of those who press and struggle for the highest places, for the Divine path to greatness lies in quite an opposite direction.

Ruskin, in *Modern Painters*, has a chapter on 'The Rule of the Greatest.' 'In one sense, and

that deep,' he says, 'there is no such thing as magnitude. The least thing is as the greatest, and one day as a thousand years, in the eyes of the Maker of great and small things. In another sense, and that close to us and necessary, there exist both magnitude and value. Though not a sparrow falls to the ground unnoted, there are yet creatures who are of more value than many; and the same Spirit which weighs the dust of the earth in a balance, counts the isles as a little thing. The just temper of human mind in this matter may, nevertheless, be told shortly. Greatness can be rightly estimated only when minuteness is justly reverenced. Greatness is the aggregation of minuteness; nor can its sublimity be felt truthfully by any mind unaccustomed to the affectionate watching of what is least.' The painter's Rule of Greatness is of universal application. The great Lord of men is not One who despises and tramples on the weak, but One who comes down like rain upon the mown grass, who breaks not the bruised reed nor quenches the smoking flax.

It is no simple matter to discern the great. 'When the great Athanasius lived on earth,' says Pascal, 'he did not appear in the light in which we now regard him, he was only a man called Athanasius.' Even thus greatness ever stands among us, as 'one whom we know not,' because our eyes are holden that we cannot see. 'Most of us know little of the great originators until they have been lifted up among the constellations and already rule our fates. But that Herschel, for example, who "broke the barriers of the heavens" —did he not once play a provincial church-organ, and give music-lessons to stumbling pianists? Each of those Shining Ones had to walk on the earth among neighbours who perhaps thought much more of his gait and his garments than of anything which was to give him a title to everlasting fame: each of them had his little local personal history sprinkled with small temptations and sordid cares, which made the retarding friction of his course towards final companionship with the immortals.'[1]

The truly great man is himself least conscious of his greatness. 'No really great man ever thought himself so,' says Hazlitt.[2] Walking and working in the simplicity of his soul, he fares onward to the surprise of the great award.

[1] George Eliot, *Middlemarch*.
[2] *Table Talk*.

It would be impossible, however, to exaggerate the influence of the great upon the minds of men and the course of human history. They are the beacon lights of the race, set there for the inspiration and guidance of mankind. Carlyle finds in reverence for the great the very essence of religion. 'I say great men are still admirable; I say there is, at bottom, nothing else admirable! No nobler feeling than this of admiration for one higher than himself dwells in the breast of man. It is to this hour, and at all hours, the vivifying influence in man's life. Religion I find stands upon it; not Paganism only, but far higher and truer religions, —all religion hitherto known. Hero-worship, heartfelt prostrate admiration, submission; burning, boundless, for a noblest godlike Form of Man, —is not that the germ of Christianity itself? The greatest of all Heroes is One—whom we do not name here! Let sacred silence meditate that sacred matter; you will find in it the ultimate perfection of a principle extant throughout man's whole history on earth.'[1] If this be so, and there is a large element of truth in it, then the records of the great are our principal lesson-book in the art of noble living. Pasteur manifestly thought so when he wrote: 'From the life of men whose passage is marked by a race of durable light, let us piously gather up every word, every incident likely to make known the incentives of their great soul, for the education of posterity'.[2]

But first it behoves us to fix with some precision our standard of true greatness.

II.

Human Estimates of Greatness.

1. The *childish estimate*, according to which bigness or show is mistaken for greatness—Sir George Henschel tells of his first impressions of the Emperor Napoleon. 'Next to a heavy piece of ordnance was standing at attention, in a beautiful uniform, and holding in his right hand a long ramrod, a very tall gunner, made taller still by the huge bearskin busby on his head. Over the cannon was leaning a little man in a long riding-coat, high boots reaching to above the knees, and a queer-shaped, two-cornered hat, his hands folded behind his back. To this picture I remember my

[1] *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, 10.
[2] *Life of Pasteur*, 164.

mother carrying me, in her arms, when I was still tiny enough for this ignominious though affectionate mode of transportation, and asking me, "Now tell me, which of these two men is the great Emperor Napoleon?" Whereupon I promptly pointed to the big gunner, and was gently put right with a smile and a kiss. Do not many of us remain, in that respect, children to the end? I think of "Napoleon at Fontainebleau" each time I see weight taken for worth'.[1]

How many seem never to get beyond this childish stage! Is not the vulgar worship of wealth, title, social position, on a par with the child's mistaking of the grenadier for the Emperor? One of Tennyson's friends asked a cabman at Freshwater, 'Whose house is that?'

Cabman—'It belongs to one Tennyson.'

Friend—'He is a great man, you know?'

Cabman—'He a great man! he only keeps one man-servant, and he don't sleep in the house.'[2]

The writer had a similar experience in Central Africa. A chief, who had so many wives and children that he disdained to count them, asked, 'How many children have you?' and on being told four, remarked with contempt, 'It is easy to see you are not a great man in your country'. Is it a whit less childish to estimate a man's greatness by the size of his bank-book, or the grandeur of his house, or the style he keeps up?

It was Napoleon who said, 'Greatness is nothing, unless it be lasting,'[3] and assuredly those material things that have a show of greatness to the vulgar eye are but a fleeting pageant. Froude, the historian, in summing up the career of Lord Beaconsfield, says truly, 'When the shadows lengthen and the sun is going down, earthly greatness fades to tinsel, and nothing is any longer beautiful to look back upon but the disinterested actions, many or few, which are scattered over the chequered career. Disraeli, like many other distinguished men, had to pay the penalty of his character. A fool may have his vanity satisfied with garters and peerages; Disraeli must have been conscious of their emptiness.'[4]

[1] Sir George Henschel, *Musings and Memories of a Musician*, 4.

[2] *Tennyson and His Friends*, 179.

[3] *Table Talk*, 147.

[4] *The Earl of Beaconsfield*, 254.

2. The *barbarian estimate* identifies greatness with brute force, and this estimate is widely prevalent. Man is first of all an animal, and a fighting animal at that. Hence the ideal of greatness most native to his untutored mind is to be lord of the herd. The Indian can think of no higher compliment than to call his honoured guest a big bull. And many of those to whose names the world has attached the epithet 'great,' have been little else than the fighting bulls of the human herd. They trampled to greatness over the prostrate bodies of the weak. Alexander in Asia and Cæsar in Gaul did work very like what the Kaiser tried to do in Belgium. They succeeded where he failed, and the world acclaims them great. It is a barbarous judgment, and surely cannot be the final verdict. Writing of the career of Frederick the Great, Lord Rosebery asks, 'What is greatness? What is glory? These are the questions which arise on a contemplation of Frederick's life. He indeed had his full measure of glory and is usually designated as "great." But his death was preceded by scores of thousands of others for which he was solely responsible, a gloomy and sorrowful procession of plain folk slaughtered because "ambition, interest, the desire to make people talk about me" had let him seize without provocation or justification a province from a young woman unable at the moment to defend. These souls surely await him at the gates of the future.'[1]

The present-day worship of athletics has in it a large element of the barbarian estimate of greatness. The knock-out blow, the dropped goal, are lauded to the skies, and the man who can achieve these things is a national hero. Yet, after all, the proud champion of the ring could be ignominiously battered, tossed and trampled on by a common ox. It is a poor affair to glorify a man for qualities in which he is far surpassed by many a brute beast. If greatness lay in that direction man would make but a feeble show.

3. The *Greek estimate*, as we may call it, bases greatness on intellect, and this comes nearer the truth. 'Man,' as Pascal says, 'may be as frail as a reed, but he is a reed that thinks, and so is greater than the unthinking universe, by which he can so easily be crushed. Rank in the scale of

[1] *Miscellanies, Literary and Historical*, i. 128.

values, it may be pointed out, must not be measured by the space occupied or the time outlasted; else the whale or the tortoise would be higher among animals than the human being. Nay, to Hegel, even the infinity of Space and Time themselves had nothing dreadful about it but its tediousness.'[1] It is by virtue of the spiritual side of him that man claims his high place in the scale of being. 'Like helpless men we set our all on the one thing left us, and lift up our hearts, knowing that we are but a mere speck among a myriad worlds, yet greater than the sum of them; having our roots in the dark places of the earth, but our branches in the sweet airs of heaven.'[2]

Yet greatness of intellect often withers and becomes an unlovely thing because at its root is the cankerworm of pride. Has not Satan been conceived by Milton as a great intellectual? T. H. Green, himself a prince among the intellectuals, said, 'Every man in an "intellectual society" knows self-conceit as the plague of his own heart. His soul hugs it to the exclusion of the light of God.'[3] Arthur Sidgwick in his *School Homilies* has a homily on greatness, in which he finds the secret in the moral realm rather than in the intellectual. 'True greatness, we know, is not given to the capable and commanding intellect especially; it is not an affair of intellect at all. The real greatness is not the greatness of brilliance, which is recognized at once by the world. That too has its usefulness, if guided by earnestness and love, a usefulness that cannot be exaggerated. But the greatest greatness of all, and at the same time the greatness at which all alike can aim, and some part of which, at least, there is none who cannot make his own, is the greatness of purity and energy and love and self-devotion, the greatness of a noble life.'[4]

III.

The Divine Standard of Greatness.

After all, only God is great, and human greatness must be in some sort a copy of the Divine. Rather we should say, greatness in a man comes by the presence in him of the Divine. 'No man was ever great,' says Cicero, 'save by some divine inspiration.'[1] Carlyle is of the same mind. He discerns in this the essential quality of the hero. 'There needs not a great soul to make a hero; there needs a god-created soul which will be true to its origin; that will be a great soul!'[2] Dr. John Brown, the gentle author of *Horæ Subsecivæ*, declares that the great man 'must have what is called a "presence," must communicate to the beholder something of indwelling power.' 'It would be well,' he adds, 'if the world would, among the many other uses it makes of great men, make more of this,—that they are manifestors of God—revealers of His will—vessels of His omnipotence—and are among the very chiefest of His ways and works.'[3] In a word, greatness is God-likeness.

But then, what is God? Not merely great in power and wisdom, but great, above all, in goodness and truth and love. And this is the Divine standard by which human greatness is to be judged.

George Adam Smith remarks that the prophets of Israel revealed Jehovah as 'a God with a character.' The righteousness and faithfulness, the loving-kindness and tender mercy of God were the burden of their message. What, therefore, they revealed of God became a standard of greatness for men. And the prophets themselves are justly to be called great because they embodied in their own characters the divine truths they uttered, and were shining examples to their people of moral greatness. It was as the culmination of this noble line that John the Baptist was declared to be 'great in the sight of the Lord.'

But the final revelation of God came neither through the prophets nor through John, but through the only begotten Son. It was another John who said 'God is love,' and he learned that from what he saw in Jesus. In Him we see God humbling Himself to serve and suffer in order that He might redeem. The meaning of this revelation is that God is supremely great in love. And so the perfect standard of human greatness is set for mankind in the God-man Jesus Christ. To live and love and serve like Him, if need be to suffer and die for love's sake like Him, that alone

[1] C. C. J. Webb, *Divine Personality and Human Life*, 74-5.
[2] Michael Fairless, *The Roadmender*, 88.
[3] *Sermons*, 47.
[4] i. 155.

[1] *De Natura Deorum*, ii. 66.
[2] *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, 134.
[3] *Horæ Subsecivæ*, ii. 119.

is to be Godlike, that alone is true greatness. The teaching of Jesus is explicit on this point. There was a strife among the twelve as to which of them should be accounted the greatest. 'But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.' It is in respect of the advent of this new and Diviner spirit that Christ can say of the Baptism that, although 'among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.'

This ideal of greatness in humble and loving service has rooted itself in the Christian mind, and become, as we trust, a permanent possession of humanity. It has been thus described, 'To live for God's sake, and for God's sake to become the servant of others; to soothe the sorrows, and lighten the burdens of the oppressed; to make the world's crooked places straight, and its rough places plain; to rescue the perishing, raise the fallen, and cheer the desolate; to do all these offices of love with unwearying patience and self-denial, and not grudge the expenditure of ease, and health, and life itself, when called for; such is our Lord's idea of greatness; such was the life led by Himself, and such is the lesson which, alike by example and precept, He has left for us all.'[1]

This ideal of greatness has found personal embodiment in an innumerable company of those who have received by faith the spirit of Christ, and have laboured in love for the redemption of our fallen race. To tell of them would be to write the history of the Christian church, for they are to be found in every branch of the Church and in every age. We need not travel to the distant and heroic past, for no time has been richer in noble examples than our own. Take one instance from the rich field of modern missions. C. G. Moore, writing of the founder of the China Inland Mission, says, 'Every idea I had hitherto cherished of a "great man" was completely shattered: the high, imposing airs, and all the trappings were conspicuously absent; but Christ's ideal of greatness was then and there so securely set in my heart, that it has remained through all the years, up to this moment. I strongly suspect that, by his unconscious influence, Mr. Hudson Taylor did more than any other man of his day to compel Christian people to revise their ideas of greatness.'[1] Or this other instance from the equally rich field of home service. John Richard Green, the historian, writes, 'I turn angrily from all my moans, and other people's moans at *their* life, rendering real greatness impossible. I see people straining after power, longing to be able to influence and what not. . . . There has been in my whole life, among the thousands I have met, one person and one person only who has influenced *me*, before whom my whole soul bent in reverence and adoring love. And she was the quiet wife of an East End parson, who would have laughed at the idea of influencing any . . . . Hers was a surrender without reserve, a frank self-abandonment to a wisdom she knew was love. With that wisdom she communed in meditation and prayer, and its voice was her supreme law. She learned the lesson of lowliness in the school of the Cross.'[2]

Thus we find that the true path leads by the Cross and over the Hill Difficulty and through the Valley of Humiliation. And we reach a standard which involves the final and utter reversal of the world's judgment. Even so, our Lord assures us, it shall be, for 'many that are first shall be last, and the last first.'

IV.

The Attaining of Greatness.

It remains to ask how far and by what means this greatness is attainable by us all.

1. *Greatness is a gift,* the gift of the Spirit of God. It cannot be taught, it is an endowment, of nature or of grace, though why we should distinguish these two is not clear, since both are from the same hand. Ruskin says, 'You may teach imitation, because the meanest man can imitate; but you can neither teach idealism nor composition, because only a great man can choose,

[1] W. Garden Blaikie, in *The Following of Christ*, 140.

[1] *Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission*, 281.
[2] D. Butler, *Prayer in Experience*, 287.

conceive or compose; and he does all these things necessarily, and because of his nature. 'His greatness is in his choice of things, in his analysis of them, and his combining powers involve the totality of his knowledge in life.'[1] In other words, a man's greatness is not in any wise external to him, but is rooted in his inmost nature by the spirit that is given him. It is consistently taught throughout the Old Testament that eminence in every department of life is the gift of the Spirit of God. The wisdom of the ruler, the valour of the hero, the mechanical skill of the craftsman are each a Divine gift.

Now, since Pentecost, this doctrine has received a marvellous extension. Greatness is Christlikeness, and the Spirit of Christ is freely bestowed on all His people, to be in them the prompter and living power of all goodness. If this means anything it means that true greatness is possible to any man who will receive and live by the Spirit of Christ. 'Christ's estimate of greatness differs from all others principally in this, that, according to it, greatness is not to be the monopoly of a privileged class or the title given to certain exceptional forms of service. It is to be common to every section of the community, it is to consist, not in the importance of the act performed, but in the motive which is behind the action.'[2]

2. *Greatness is finally attained,* as St. Paul reminds us, '*by patient continuance in well doing.*' The Divine gift must be exercised, the heavenly talent must be put to usury. Genius has been defined as 'an infinite capacity for taking pains,' and certainly without that capacity the vital force of genius would run to waste. 'Greatness only achieved through drudgery,' is the striking title of one of Sidgwick's School Homilies. Similarly, Dean Inge says, 'Another mark of greatness is unbroken consistency and unity of aim in a long life.'[3] This is that quality which our Lord calls faithfulness. It has nothing to do with the greatness of a man's sphere or the attainment of what is called success in life. Indeed, one may discover, as Amiel finely says, that 'the path of success is closed to me only that I may find opening before me the path of heroism, of moral greatness and resignation.'[1]

To the man who lives thus, patient in loving service, 'not soon weary in well doing,' the hour of destiny will strike at last. 'Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, be thou ruler over many things.' Thus shall true greatness in the end be crowned and glorified.

J. H. Morrison.

[1] *Study of Architecture,* § 15.
[2] Bernard Vaughan, *What of To-Day?* 336.
[3] *Outspoken Essays,* 203.

The Spirit and Power of Elijah.

Luke i. 17.—'He shall go before his face in the spirit and power of Elijah.'

Such was the description given by the angel to Zacharias of the great office which was to be filled by the son who should, in God's providence, be wonderfully born to him. The words themselves, in the mouth of the angelic messenger, are almost a literal quotation from the last page of the Old Testament. 'Behold,' cries Malachi, as he closes his volume of prophecy, 'I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.' We know what hold that prediction took of the Jewish mind, how it echoed through the vacant centuries which parted the two dispensations, how the Jews sent officers to ask the very first who gave promise of renewing the long-broken succession of the prophets, 'Art thou Elijah?' They looked for the actual reappearance of that strange weird figure which had once been so suddenly projected upon the page of their national history, and as suddenly withdrawn.

What was particularly remarkable about the spirit and power of Elijah? What did this man specially stand for? Wherein lies his importance? He appeared at a time when tendencies and influences that were perilous to the religious and also the moral life of his country were being admitted without much question. They were days of large tolerance. People were being led to believe that they could worship and serve Jehovah, and at the same time worship and serve Baal; that they could admit into their life what was uplifting and inspiring, and at the same time give a place to what

[1] *Journal,* 1.

was degrading and debasing; that they could live a double life with a certain amount of recognition of Jehovah on the one hand, and steep themselves in the pollutions of Baal on the other. It was the double life spoken of by the Master as the attempt to serve God and Mammon; spoken of by St. Paul as drinking the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils. And the spirit and power of Elijah were the spirit and power to contest that view of things, to call for a decision the one way or the other. It cannot be both, said he. You cannot limp between the two. If it be God, then serve Him; if it be Baal, then serve him. He brought things to an issue, that is to say; and stood out as the champion of a pure religion and a pure morality.

Now it was in the spirit and power of this man that the Baptist came. He found in his day easy views of religion coupled with loose morals; this double life; this drinking of the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils. And he went forth with 'Repentance' as his watchword; called upon men to quit the double life and come out clear for God and His righteousness; called upon them to step down with him into the Jordan, to be baptized there in token that they were making a clean cut from the evil past and were coming out for the Lord and His ways—in token that there was to be no more limping between two opinions and two modes of life; they were to be out and out for God. And because that was this man's attitude, not for others only, but for himself in his own life, not for his own life only, but for others; because this took possession of all his soul and all his being as the thing that simply ought to be—he is called 'great in the sight of the Lord.' And the Master said, 'Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.'

The Spirit and power of Elijah, then, may be seen in two ways.

1. *In superiority to the world.*—The prophet must be manifestly not of the world. His home here is the desert. His citizenship is in heaven. The Elijah in spirit and power cannot be a man of the world. In the world, as a man of flesh and blood, he must be, as a man knowing the misery and sin and the ruin to which he is to be voice and hand and medicine; knowing the disease better and more intimately than others, as possessing by the gift of God its discernment and its cure—in the world, therefore, but not of it. They who would accept his ministry must go to him in the wilderness. They will not find him by an idle curiosity which might just watch the waving of the reeds on the banks of the Jordan. They will not find him by that sort of worldly seeking which might bring them out to see flaunting by the wearers of soft clothing and the dwellers in luxurious courts of kings. They must go after him into his desert, and seek him there as God's prophet.

A man can no more live two lives than he can serve two masters. There is a sense, indeed, in which it is quite easy, quite common, to combine these contraries. But such a man must discard the hope of being employed in God's work as here described. An Elijah cannot live two lives. Living for God, he lives not for the world. What is it to him if Ahab calls him enemy, or Jezebel hunts his life? What is it to him whether Herod hears him gladly, or makes a present of his head to Herodias's daughter? His life is hidden—hidden with God; hence his courage, his truth, his spirit, his power. He is above the world. He can confront earth's threatenings, because he has trodden underfoot earth's enticements.

¶ Of Walker of Tinnevelly his biographer writes: 'It was not that he had to fortify himself against the desire for pleasure, using the word in its unspoiled sense; it was that he had found a pleasure beside which the ordinary pleasures of life pale into nothingness. He often quoted in this connection a word spoken by the woman missionary on board ship, who, when questioned as to why she did not join the diversions of life, said, "I find Christ enough." To him joy in Christ, and the joy of direct service for Him by speech or by writing, outweighed a thousandfold all lesser joys. When the sun arises in his strength, who counts the stars?

'But though such a position has its moments of secret suffering, it has also its secret rewards: "He set the standard," wrote a retired S. Indian missionary in 1912, "and though many never followed it, yet his life was the living testimony of what Christ calls His followers to be." For truly his actions were always of a decisive sort; he was not made for compromise, and the modern attitude

towards doubtful things never appealed to him. "Whatsoever was not of faith was sin," so far as he personally was concerned. The word in 2 Esdras, "Then began I greatly to commend them that stood so stiffly for the name of the Lord," exactly expresses him. And what he commended he practised.

It is a temper of mind out of fashion for the moment, and blessed by the adjective "narrow." Something more nebulous, a more delicate blending of neutral tints, is in vogue to-day. But whatever the voice of the hour may say, wherever a strong character is laid hold upon by an overmastering Power, there we have that sudden flashing forth of a clear band of primary colour; and the eye, accustomed to the scheme which allows of nothing definite, is arrested.'[1]

2. The other striking point in the spirit and power of Elijah is its *earnest controversy with idols*.—The crisis of Elijah's life was on Carmel. There through a whole day he did battle on a material stage with a vile and sensual demon-worship. He brought to issue for that age the question between God and Baal. And the chapter which details his conflict and victory is still as full of Divine pathos and fire as when it was written.

It is even more instructive to observe in what sense the Baptist was an iconoclast. Israel, carried captive to Babylon, unlearned effectually its inveterate tendency to idolatry. There was no subsequent relapse into image-worship. At first sight we might almost suppose that John neither possessed nor wanted the Elijah power. When you look below the surface you see, in his brief ministry, a yet closer and sterner combat with idolatry as God sees it. The idolatry which then prevailed was more secret, more insidious. There had been the change, between Elijah's day and the Baptist's from ancient to modern. The state of religion, as John found it in Palestine, was substantially that of modern Europe. It consisted in a simple substitution of form for spirit, of name for reality, of 'religion', the fetter, for 'faith', the liberty and the life. When John the Baptist boldly met the Pharisees who came, with patronizing condescension, to submit to his baptism as the fashion of the moment, with the tremendous denunciation, 'O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance,' he was re-enacting by the Jordan the very slaughter of the brook Kishon; he was entering the lists with a subtler than any visible idolatry; he was proving himself master, in the might of the Spirit, of those lying vanities which counterfeit piety; he was laying the axe to the very root of the tree of falsehood in its most perilous, most poisonous development,

A man must be a brave man, independent of the world, in advance of his time, to do this half of Elijah's work thoroughly. Each section of the Church, each period, each congregation, has its idolatries. In one it may be the exaggeration of form, in another it may be the disparagement of duty; in one, the deification of Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas—some honoured church-name consecrated into a popedom; in another, an ignorant parade of the boastful 'I am of Christ' as an assertion of a higher spirituality than can consist at all with subordination to human authority. Any side, any particular, any feature of truth can be distorted into an idol; you have but to isolate it, you have but to make it swallow up its check and its correction, lying on the same page or another page of Holy Scripture, and it becomes an idol at once, which only the power of an Elijah can beat into the Nehushtan which it must be made.

[1] Amy Wilson-Carmichael, *Walker of Tinnevelly*, 285.

Prepared for the Lord.

Luke i. 17.—'A people prepared for the Lord.'

When we speak of preparing ourselves for the future, we commonly think of some coming evil. So it comes to pass that we are ready for the worse and not for the better event. Preparedness for the best things is rare, because we do not realize that they need to be prepared for, and concentrate our attention on steeling ourselves against possible adversity. By so doing we miss many of life's highest opportunities, and find our gain turn to loss. Many a man is prepared for misfortune but not for prosperity. Defeat would have found him brave and patient, victory makes him overbearing and selfish. Loss would have drawn out his nobler qualities of industry and determination; wealth corrupts him with selfishness and luxurious indulgence and display. We are often prepared to meet the Devil; let us be prepared also to meet God.

1. First, there is the preparation of the purification of the heart. All meditation leads that way at once. There is much to be forgiven before we can hope to understand and triumph, and there is much also to be changed. It is only the pure in heart who can by any means see God, and the evil habits of thought, imagination, and desire must be searched out and put away. What softness and self-indulgence, what malice and resentment, what harshness and cruelty still linger in us all. How unwilling we are to understand the mind of Christ; how selfish and greedy of pleasure, how determined in our demand for our own way. But here is a great opportunity and call to return to the simplicity of little children, to cast ourselves at the outset before the Cross, and eagerly to consent to the cleansing fires of conscience and the love of Christ.

2. But there is also much to understand; and communion with God along the channels of the central beliefs of Christendom implies much reflection. The conventionalities of daily life have put our thoughts out of proportion and perspective. Its facile acquiescences have dulled our power of judging and distinguishing. Its false emphasis has subverted our sense of truth. Its unwholesome moods have poisoned our views of many things. Its fuss and crowding have detracted and confused us. Minds in such a condition are in no sense competent for the highest thoughts. It requires a season of aloofness, of as much silence and peace as life will allow, and of honest and laborious thinking and recollection of the scattered faculties, before we are fit to meet our God in communion. There is nothing which the present generation needs so much as discipline of the mind for serious thinking. The dimness of faith, and the consequent feebleness of religious life, are to be cured mainly by studying afresh the thoughts of really great thinkers, and by persistently setting the attention and holding it set in the direction of the central truths.

¶ As the day now approached on which she was to depart this life (which day Thou knewest, we did not), it fell out—Thou, as I believe, by Thy secret ways arranging it—that she and I stood alone, leaning in a certain window, from which the garden of the house we occupied at Ostia could be seen; at which place, removed from the crowd, we were resting ourselves for the voyage, after the fatigues of a long journey. We then were conversing alone very pleasantly; and, 'forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,' we were seeking between ourselves in the presence of the Truth, which Thou art, of what nature the eternal life of the saints would be, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man. But yet we opened wide the mouth of our heart, after those supernal streams of Thy fountain, 'the fountain of life,' which is 'with Thee'; that being sprinkled with it according to our capacity, we might in some measure weigh so high a mystery.

And when our conversation had arrived at that point, that the very highest pleasure of the carnal senses, and that in the very brightest material light, seemed by reason of the sweetness of that life not only not worthy of comparison, but not even of mention, we, lifting ourselves with a more ardent affection towards 'the Self-same,' did gradually pass through all corporeal things, and even the heaven itself, whence sun, and moon, and stars shine upon the earth; yea, we soared higher yet by inward musing, and discoursing, and admiring Thy works; and we came to our own minds, and went beyond them, that we might advance as high as that region of unfailing plenty, where Thou feedest Israel for ever with the food of truth, and where life is that Wisdom by whom all these things are made, both which have been, and which are to come.[1]

3. But there is also necessary the boldness of Divine affections. We all admit that the world is, one way or another, too much with us. Preparation, therefore, must include the practice of looking beyond the world, and carrying up our thoughts and feelings to God Himself. But it requires daring to train our eyes on the Divine, and none but the courageous in heart will succeed in doing it. For the affections that are to find God in Christ must travel along the two lines of our worst and of our best.

(1) Let us offer to Him our worst, and dare to face the worst that we may offer it, crying to Him from the depths. It is a sorry offering, that of the wreckage of broken resolutions, and desires that

[1] St. Augustine, *Confessions*, IX. x. 23.

have been in the slime of earthliness, and love that has wandered and comes half-heartedly back to faithfulness to Him. This is, indeed, the only place where such an offering has any value set upon it. No other than God would accept such things, and it requires a courageous faith to bring them. Yet the courage will be abundantly rewarded. There is no aspect of the glory of the Lord so brilliant as the glory of God the Saviour seen from the depths of shame. There is no beauty that can compare with the beauty of Christ seen through tears of penitence.

Wilt thou forgive that sin where I begun
Which was my sin, tho' it were done before?
Wilt thou forgive that sin thro' which I run
And do run still: tho' I do still deplore?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For, I have more.[1]

(2) And no less courage is demanded for the offering of our best to God. In the discouragement of contrition we are apt to disbelieve in any loftiness or greatness that we may ever have seen in life. Yet life is good and great in spite of us and our failure, and we have not surrendered our heritage in its nobilities. However far we have come short of realizing it, the ideal self still floats before our aspirations, and calls us upward. Let us offer to God the manhood we would fain achieve, the intermittent but genuine longings after holy things, the attempts to do right and play the man in difficult circumstances.

In a word, let us face and fully recognize both our weakness and our strength, our worst and our best. Let us bring them both, a strange offering of contrasts, to His feet, that, in our communion with Him, His power and His love may go out upon them both, and recreate us after His image.

Lord, what have I that I may offer Thee?
Look, Lord, I pray Thee, and see.—

What is it thou hast got?
Nay, child, what is it thou hast not?
Thou hast all gifts that I have given to thee:
Offer them all to Me,
The great ones and the small,
I will accept them one and all.—

I have a will, good Lord, but it is marred;
A heart both crushed and hard:
Not such as these the gift
Clean-handed lovely saints uplift.—

Nay, child, but wilt thou judge for Me?
I crave not thine, but thee.—

Ah, Lord, Who lovest me!
Such as I have now give I Thee.[1]

[1] John Donne, 'A Hymn to God the Father,' in *Divine Poems*.

Scepticism.

Luke i. 18.—'Whereby shall I know this?'

THE demand upon Zacharias's faith was too great. He had not dared to ask for such a child; perhaps he had not felt worthy of such a son. It was a natural reaction, when the angel ceased his wondrous story, for Zacharias to ask: 'Whereby shall I know this?' He does not deny the possibility of such an event, though he sees at once the obvious difficulty of such a hope in view of the old age of himself and Elisabeth. Perhaps the angel had overlooked this point. At any rate, it will do no harm to ask for proof. Zacharias could excuse himself by the example of Gideon and Hezekiah, who asked for signs, and by that of Moses and Ahaz, who had signs without asking. At such moments one's mind works rapidly, but not always correctly. One naturally recoils when one's day-dream is objectified. Martha at the grave of Lazarus is a case in point. But after all, however specious and excusable, it was doubt of the angel's word, of the message of God, and doubt in spite of the miraculous presence of the angel, itself proof enough if any were needed.

Zacharias had all his life been a steadfast believer in God, without sign or wonder to help his faith. For centuries God had been silent; not even a prophet had spoken; there was no Shekinah glory in the Holy of Holies; there was no Urim and Thummim; but silence always, and a blank and unopen heaven above him. And yet he believed God, served Him blamelessly in all His ordinances and commandments. He had so far no extraneous helps to his faith. Behold now God sends an angel to him—and that angel is Gabriel—with a message that his faith, so long steadfast, was to be rewarded in the realization of his most cherished hope; and forthwith he meets this super-

[1] Christina G. Rossetti, *Verses*, 24.

natural messenger with distrust, and doubts the truth of his message. He could believe God and serve Him faithfully without an answer to his prayers; but he could not believe Him in the answer to his prayers, even though an angel from heaven had been sent to assure and comfort him. Gabriel comes to assure him of God's favour, and forthwith he demands a sign. Could anything be more perverse? In this connection we are reminded of the words of our Lord put into the mouth of Abraham in his answer to the prayer of Dives for one to be sent from the dead to warn his brethren 'lest they also come into this place of torment.' And 'Abraham saith unto him, they have Moses and the prophets; . . . neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.' From this we learn that unbelief does not arise from lack of evidence, but rather from other causes, as a lack of will, or a secret and determined opposition to God in the affections.

1. We are not accustomed to deal practically with the unseen world. We speculate and theorize about it, and believe in our theories. But believing in a theory or in an article of faith no more meets the real wants of the soul than does a printed bill of fare satisfy the hungry man. A man does not dine on a bill of fare. Yet many believers are vainly trying to live on their articles of faith. They deal with the proposition rather than with the things proposed. Our intelligence and reason may carry us midway between earth and heaven, but cannot take us into the heavenlies themselves, or put us into possession of the things which 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,' but which 'God hath prepared for them that love him.' It is only the spirit of man trained to familiarity with spiritual realities that enables us to deal with God practically, at close quarters. A faith which does not turn unseen into substantial realities; which does not introduce the soul to the 'powers of the world to come'; which does not bring heaven down to earth; which does not carry the soul into heaven with Christ, is not a faith that will believe in the presence of the supernatural.

O, Master of the Beautiful,
  Creating us from hour to hour,
Give me this vision to the full
  To see in lightest things thy power.
This vision give, no heaven afar,
  No throne, and yet I will rejoice
Knowing beneath my feet a star
  Thy word in every wandering voice.[1]

Zacharias had believed God, and in God, all his life. He had been a faithful servant of God, in the offices of personal religion, such as prayer and praise; in the public offices of religion, such as serving the altar of the Temple; in practical righteousness, such as 'walking before God and man in all the ordinances and commandments blameless'; but the moment the unseen became seen, and, as it were, the supernatural became natural, then, instead of his faith flaming up into a glorious conflagration, it died down into cold ashes of doubt and unbelief. He doubted if the angel before him was sent from God, and asked for credentials. The supernatural had come before him, and he doubted its reality or genuineness. How many times we have asked of God certain things, and when they have come to us we were disposed to say, in unbelief, 'This would have happened in any case'!

2. We are uncertain of the messenger of the unseen. In all probability, when Zacharias saw Gabriel standing by his side, he did not recognize him as an angel of God. He probably thought him only a man. He doubtless did wonder how any man came to be standing there in the Holy Place, which was not lawful for any but the priests. But why should he have recognized him as an angel of God? In all the appearances of angels recorded in the Old and New Testaments there is no evidence that in outward appearance they differed from ordinary men. It is only artists who portray angels bathed in supernatural light, and supplemented with wings. The Bible always speaks of angels as being 'men,' and on their first appearance they are never attended with any outward evidence of the supernatural. When Joshua saw 'the captain of the Lord's host' standing before Jericho, he mistook him for an ordinary military chieftain, and straightway went up to him and demanded on whose side he had drawn his sword. He did not know that it was the Angel of the Lord. When the three angels appeared before Abraham's tent at Mamre, the patriarch

[1] A. E., *Collected Poems*, 119.

did not recognize them as angels, but took them to be men on a journey, to whom he made haste to offer hospitality. It was not until they communicated their message to him and to Sarah that they were revealed in their true characters. Neither did Lot recognize the two angels who came to rescue him from Sodom; nor did the Sodomites distinguish them as being other than men, whom they would have defiled. Peter did not at first recognize as an angel the man who came and delivered him out of the prison. When the women went early to the sepulchre of the Lord and saw the angels there, they seemed to them but two men in white robes. And when, a moment after, Jesus stood before Mary she did not even recognize Him as her Lord, but supposed Him to have been the gardener. The disciples on their way to Emmaus did not at first recognize the risen Lord, but supposed Him to have been a stranger passing through the country, ignorant of the great facts of the past few days. Is there not a lesson in all this? The supernatural is veiled to us in the natural. Angels appear as men—nay! are we not told: 'Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares'? We are in the habit of associating the supernatural with the marvellous, especially with the outwardly marvellous. When the greatest supernatural event of all time occurred in this world, it was in form and to outward appearance as natural as that of the birth of a peasant child; and yet that Babe of Bethlehem was the Eternal Word of God incarnate. If this mightiest and greatest supernatural manifestation of the Eternal and Unseen came clothed in the natural, then may we not expect that there is less difference between what we call the natural and the supernatural than we have supposed? Men are demanding some supernatural manifestation of the unseen, and behold the supernatural is all around us and before our eyes every day, and we do not recognize it. We have become so accustomed to count everything seen as being purely natural that we have ceased to see God in anything, but have remanded Him to some region of the imagination, or resolved Him quite out of the universe. We study the laws of the universe, and contemplate the working of what we call Nature; but so intently do we consider second causes that we often fail to recognize in these natural phenomena the First Cause. Thus it is that certain scientists, by constantly dwelling upon the material shadows, have altogether lost sight of the immaterial substance of things. Because Gabriel was so like a man, Zacharias could not recognize him as an angel. He doubted the messenger because he was in appearance too human.

3. The things promised of God are out of the ordinary course of nature. Strangely enough, while we are denying the supernatural because it so often appears as the natural, we deny that God can fulfil a promise that involves any power or event transcending the natural. The paramount objection of agnostic science is that God cannot answer prayer because nothing can happen out of the ordinary or observed course of nature; and whatever does happen has come to pass in regular sequence, and not as a special interposition. Even though we are believers, we have all more or less been influenced by this rule of natural science. We have assumed that we have made final observations, and know all there is to know about Nature and God's relations to it; that God cannot do anything extraordinary; that He is a voluntary prisoner in His own world, manacled by laws which He made, not to use, but to limit His power. Abraham once fell into this narrow line of thinking when he said, 'Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?' Happily his faith triumphed over this momentary philosophical scepticism. So Zacharias fell into the same error of thinking when he unbelievingly opposed the fact of his age and that of his wife to the promise of God. He had forgotten God's answer to the unbelief of Sarah: 'Is any thing too hard for the Lord?' Thus, by our constant habit of limiting the Almighty in His actions to the sphere of our knowledge and experience, we dishonour Him and give ourselves over as prisoners to doubt and the devil.

4. We have forgotten God's dealings in the past. Had Zacharias really remembered the story of Abraham or believed it in other than an academic way, instead of demanding a sign, he would have broken forth into joyful thanksgiving, saying, 'And will God indeed do unto me as He did for

His servant Abraham of old?' Is not the whole Old Testament record a magnificent testimony to the supernatural power of God? Is not its every promise based on this: 'With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible'? 'How can these things be?' said Nicodemus. 'Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?' We think we shall suffer need, because we have forgotten how in times past God has delivered and helped us. We have either not erected an Ebenezer or, having done so, have forgotten all about it. There is no better passage of Scripture for us to call to mind than this: 'Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.' For in this Ebenezer there lies a promise and guarantee of future help as well as a record of past deliverance. It was one of God's constant complaints against His ancient people that they had such short memories. They forgot the wonders in Egypt as soon as they were hemmed in by the sea before them and Pharaoh behind them, even though the cloudy pillar was present with them. They forgot God again at the waters of Marah, almost before the echoes of the triumphant song of Miriam over the destruction of the hosts of Pharaoh in the Red Sea had ceased sounding in their ears. They forgot all these wonders in the wilderness, and became unbelieving concerning water and food, and the will and power of God to give them the promised land. So they fell away into unbelief and rebellion—and death. The disciples forgot all the sayings of Jesus concerning His resurrection from the dead, and so were unbelieving when the event transpired. But for this forgetfulness Thomas would not have asked for a physical proof of the Resurrection. If we would avoid unbelief, then let us call to mind the former things of God—His past faithfulness in giving, and in fulfilling promises alike to ourselves and to others. Even though you be newly converted and have had no great experience of His faithfulness concerning promises, yet you need only to ask other Christians and they will tell you how true God is, though He sometimes tarries long.

5. The promise is too good to be true. When God told Abraham that a son should be born to him and to Sarah in their old age, and that neither the son of a strange woman nor Eliezer his slave should be his heir, he 'fell upon his face, and laughed' for joy and gladness. The women to whom Christ spake after the Resurrection fled to spread the news of this great wonder, and as they fled they believed not for joy. Many of us know what this is. Indeed, when we think of all God's goodness and mercy to us from the day when He called us by His grace till now, it is difficult for us to believe that God has wrought these things for us. And yet has not God challenged us to ask and expect large things from Him? Is He not a wonder-working God; and does He not delight to work those wonders for His own whom He has redeemed by working the wonder of the universe—the Incarnation of Jesus? Was He not then just bringing about that wonder of which Zacharias doubted the prelude? If faith should deal only with ordinary things such as might admit of an easy explanation, then we might soon become 'naturalists' and leave God out of account altogether. But faith is given us that we may deal with God about large things. Things 'too good to be true.'

¶ One day, when Mr. Kennedy, a former General Secretary of the Y.M.C.A., was speaking to children on the text 'whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely,' he wanted to impress upon them that each one is included in that 'whosoever,' also that when God promises anything He means what He says, and it only rests with us to believe and take Him at His word. To illustrate this Mr. Kennedy took a shilling from his pocket, and holding it up before the children, he said, 'Now, whoever would like this shilling let him take it,' and forthwith he passed along in front of the children holding the shilling before them. None ventured to take it, however, until he nearly reached the end of the row for the second time, when a little maid timidly put out her hand and took the shilling. Then a boy near, who had let it pass, said, 'Ugh, I never thought he really meant it!' Mr. Kennedy often related this incident to show how reluctant we are to believe God's promises when all the time His wonderful, loving gifts and blessings are for us if we will only put out the hand of faith and receive them.[1]

[1] *Edmund John Kennedy*, 33

The Messenger and the Message.

Luke i. 19.—'I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee.'

While preaching meets with a good deal of criticism, some wise and some foolish, it still remains true that the spoken word of the preacher has been, and is, one of the most powerful of the spiritual forces of the world. And it is so inevitably when its character and purpose are such as to recall to us in any degree these words—words which speak to us not merely with the suggestiveness of picture or allegory or symbol, but as a quite literal and truthful transcript of what all service must be, angelic or human. If we could form a definite idea of the angelic mode of being, we are sure that the chief aspect of its life and energy would be that the angels, in their ordered ranks and ministries are, like Gabriel, 'sent' by God; the very word 'angel' means one who bears a message. And so it must be with our human ministries, if they are anything more than formal or professional. The minister of God, the servant of God, is, above all else, the messenger of God. 'I am sent to speak unto thee.'

1. 'I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God.' So this messenger and minister to those that sin and to those that suffer is one that stands in the presence of God—not, you will notice, one who comes from the presence of God, but one who, while he delivers his message, while he exercises his ministry, never ceases to stand in the Divine Presence, becoming, as it were, the medium through which that Divine Presence is felt and realized in the hearts of men. That is the true priesthood, clerical or lay—that a man is such a man that through him God can draw near to others.

You possibly know a singularly beautiful hymn, by a gifted Indian lady, Miss Ellen Goreh; a hymn beginning,

> In the secret of His presence
> How my soul delights to hide!

a hymn which may well be a hidden treasure in the memory of every minister of Christ. Now the truth sung of in that hymn forms the law of the angelic life, of the will and work of a Gabriel. Would we do the Eternal Will on earth as it is done by Gabriel in heaven? 'In the presence of God' must be our motto, not only for times and places which we call sacred; no, 'It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty that we should at all times, and in all places,' abide in the Presence, 'dwelling with the King, for His work.'

Consecrated, spiritual men and women are still the greatest forces of the world. 'Why thee, why thee?' cried a disciple of St. Francis. 'Everybody follows thee, everybody desires to see thee, hear thee, and obey thee, and yet, for all that, thou art neither beautiful, nor learned, nor of noble family. Why is it, then, that it should be thou whom the world desires to follow?' And the answer is that the little Poor Man of Assisi had a fascination and a strength which beauty, learning, birth, and riches can never give: he was one of those who stand in the Presence of God. Brother Lawrence realized that Presence as much in the work of the kitchen as in the meditation of the cloister or in the worship of the Church. Even so the Lord Himself declared that, when He chose and commissioned His first Apostles, His primary purpose was that they should be 'with Him.' Out of the realized Presence comes the consecrated work. 'He that is near Me is near the fire.' It is this nearness to Christ, this sense of the perpetual presence of Christ in the heart, that gives to all Christian service its undying inspiration, and is the secret of its abiding power. Whatever our difficulties or trials, whatever limitations may be laid upon us in knowledge or capacity, in opportunity or gift, yet the true influence of our character, the true vitality of our work, rests with ourselves alone. It rests with ourselves alone whether, in the example that we set, in the service we try to do, we belong to the shining company of those who stand in the Presence of the Lord.

2. 'And I am sent unto thee.' 'I am sent,' says the angel; not merely, 'I come,' 'I am here,' but 'I am sent.' I stand in the Presence, a servant there. I have indeed such an open vision of my Master's face as makes me, in indescribable reality, His friend. But none the less I am, eternally and absolutely, His servant. Every syllable is instinct with the spirit which forgets the self of the servant in the peace and gladness of the heavenly service. The angel lives not unto himself, but unto Him

whose face he sees, and whose will he serves for ever.

We do not conceive of the angelic life as a life stunted and confined, unsatisfied and ill at ease. We thing of it and rightly—for such is the indication of Scripture—as a life that 'excels in strength,' and whose course and tenor is a song of mighty joy. Yes, but none the less (we should instantly say 'all the more,' were the whole conditions of happiness better understood by us) its law is an absolute subservience to the will and glory of God; an eternal standing in the Presence, a ceaseless going forth on the work to which the great Master sends us; and this in order to do and to say what shall bring honour, not to the servant, but to his King. The elect angels, as by a sacred necessity of their nature and its bliss, shrink back from glory and worship paid to themselves. If not Gabriel Himself, it was a true brother of his heavenly family who said, when the entranced Apostle fell at his feet, 'See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant.'

3. He came with a message—'I was sent to speak unto thee, and to bring thee these good things.'

(1) This sense of a message is essential to the speaker. St. Paul is the type of the true minister of Christ. He was not, as far as we can judge, an eloquent or attractive speaker; his Greek is involved and obscure; he was no master of the art of oratory; his very Corinthian converts told him that his speech was 'contemptible', and yet there was a tremendous power in his words. It was because he knew himself to be a man sent on a great errand; he knew himself to be the messenger, the interpreter, the ambassador of a living God. Preachers may be divided into two classes—the men who preach because they must say something, and the men who preach because they have something they must say. St. Paul belonged indubitably to the latter class. He came with a message, a message of life and death to the souls of men, and he did not care how the message was delivered, so long as it was delivered truly. And so his words have the fire and earnestness and sincerity and indefinable accent of reality in which alone, and not in fine-sounding phrases, true eloquence consists, the eloquence of a man who feels that he must speak and that the world must listen. He was as a man who runs, in the supreme crisis of his country's fortunes, to deliver the tidings of a great victory or of a great defeat.

¶ Of Phillips Brooks, the great American preacher, it was said: 'His secret does not lie in his thought or his style; not in his utterance, which is rapid almost to incoherency, and marred by an awkward habit of misreading his writing; but in his evident honesty of conviction, sincerity of purpose, and earnestness of desire—he does not think of himself or of the impression he is making.

His power is what no one less gifted than he can describe to another who has not felt it. It seems to come from a deep, personal experience which gives his message authority. When he preaches you are carried away to the need of men and your own shortcomings, and have no present consciousness of the personality of the speaker.'[1]

(2) And if this sense of a message is essential to the preacher, it ought to be powerful also in those to whom he speaks. There is a strong tendency in our time to call a man a good preacher merely because he has a gift of turning out eloquent sentences, sparkling with epigram and antithesis and literary allusion. That is an entirely false conception of the ministry of the pulpit. Preaching is not a work of art, an end in itself, a poem, or sculpture which you may enjoy for its intrinsic charm and beauty; it is an instrument, like a spade or an axe; its whole aim and object is to persuade. A man is a good preacher if, whatever he says and however he says it, he really influences his hearers, for then he fulfils the purpose for which alone he exists. As Ernest Renan somewhere says, when the world is more educated, it will not care for talent or cleverness but will be satisfied with truth. And the power of the message will largely depend on whether you receive it as such—whether, even where the human expression of it is halting and poor, you are listening for God's voice. We go to church and sit and criticize the sermon, and we think that the preacher alone is responsible; but it is not so. It is the congregation that preaches the sermon quite as much as the preacher. If the hearers are reverent and responsive, really desirous to catch a glimpse of new ideas or to shake off for a while the dust of business and the world from their moral being, or expectant of a word of God to

[1] A. V. G. Allen, *Phillips Brooks*, 237.

their own hearts spoken, as God's words often are, by the most unlikely means—then the tone they bring with them will be repeated in what they hear. The electric currents of sympathy will be at work. But if they go merely out of habit, or in a critical spirit, cold and hard and unsympathetic and unresponsive and indifferent, then equally they create an atmosphere in which great thoughts and utterances find it hard to breathe; the message loses its power and vitality, as a flower loses its bloom in the frost; and the preacher, as even the greatest of all preachers found, will not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

Let vain or busy thoughts have there no part:
Bring not thy plough, thy plots, thy pleasures thither.
Christ purged His temple; so must thou thy heart.
All worldly thoughts are but thieves met together
To cozen thee.[1]

4. The message is personal: 'I am sent to speak unto thee'—thee, separate, individualized, caught away from the crowd, alone in the perilous journey between birth and death. 'To speak unto thee!' There is but one speaking, and one spoken to. In modern times a habit has grown up with some people of selecting what they are personally attracted to in the services of the Church and of ignoring the rest. The preacher no doubt rejoices at their departure; for he would rather speak to two or three earnest men than to a whole churchful of the indifferent; but, if they have no sense that God may possibly have a message for their life, might they not remember that, however simple and humble the preacher, he deserves in almost every case the consideration due to one who is doing his best, after long preparation, to tell the truth he knows? The people who spend one hour on a Sunday morning in a West-end church—are they so religious that they need give God no more than that? Are they so busy that they have other duties to perform? They are often among the idlest members of the community. Are they so cultured that they have nothing to learn? Why, Marcus Aurelius, one of the most dominant intellects of the ages, learned something, he has told us, from everybody that he met. The real truth is that in these superficial days many have not intelligence enough to concentrate their thoughts on any serious subject for more than a few minutes at a time. St. Paul would seem to such people dull, Savonarola tediously impossible in his apocalyptic dreams, and Chrysostom with his golden voice would kindle no responsive fire.

[1] George Herbert.

Ave Maria!

Luke i. 28.—'Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee.'

THIS salutation by the angel has been translated into adoration by the Church, and the Ave Maria has taken its place beside the Pater Noster as representing a separate department of religion.

1. Against this error it might appear that adequate precaution had been provided by the Lord's own words, by the gospel story, and in the teaching of the Apostles. When the private life of Jesus was ending and the manifestation of the Son of God was to begin, such rights and influences were definitely set aside by one gentle word, 'Woman, what have I to do with thee?' When that period also was ending on the cross, and the time of glorification was to follow, another like word—'Woman, behold thy son!'—marked the filial relation as finally transferred. In each case the appellation 'woman' was significant; and the words, though tender in spirit, drew a firm line of limitation in the relations consequent on the Incarnation. It is a limitation observed in the silence of the evangelic narrative, and afterwards in that of the apostolic teaching. During the epiphany on earth, the Mother takes no part. Then it would have seemed simply natural that some sufferer should have been relieved, some act of mercy done, at her intercession. No single case occurs. Her abstention and silence show that she apprehended the situation with the dignity of a perfect concurrence. After the Ascension she is seen for a moment, but only as one of the holy company when the eleven disciples 'continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.' From that time she is seen no more, and but for the single expression, 'Made of a woman, made under the law,' there is no allusion to her in the Apostolic writings. Thus did Scrip-

ture provide that no suggestion should be left for what has happened since.

2. The cultus of the Blessed Virgin grew by ascertained stages, till it reached its pronounced development in the Mediæval Church. Liturgically it may be traced as follows. First in the reverent mention of her name before all other names in the eucharistic commemoration of the departed. Then in the assumption of her present intercession (with that of other saints) as associated with the prayers of the Church, but this only in the way of implication, without any personal appeal to the supposed Intercessor. Then as we reach the eleventh century we find direct addresses in customary use, and the Hail, Mary! has established its place in public liturgies, following the Lord's Prayer, and forming the regular commencement of the Hour Offices. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries devotions to the Blessed Virgin become more and more prominent in religious life, and in papal and episcopal documents. Her honour is exalted, and her interest sought by new services, festivals, altars, images, and ceremonies. Her advocacy is treated as the prevailing power in heaven for all sorts of purposes. Armies and enterprises are to succeed by her patronage, and anxieties and sorrows to find refuge in her compassion.

Historically, during this period the idea of advocacy and patronage in heaven was only the counterpart of the same idea in regard to almost everything that was to be done in the world. The habits of thought and action in the one case and in the other were very much the same. Success in suits and applications, and frequently even ordinary protection of undoubted rights, depended on personal influence, interest at court, or patronage of some powerful personage, to be obtained and secured by means that were well understood (and certainly, nowhere better understood than in appeals to the Roman Curia). It was the most natural thing in the world to carry the same thoughts and habits into religion, and to depend for favour and success on the intervention of advocates who might be credited with a prevailing influence in the court of heaven. In this system of celestial patronage, that of the Mother of God would of course be supreme. Those who were clients of other saints were all and always still more dependent on her, till she came practically to be regarded, scarcely as a channel, but rather as a fountain of grace. Other influences in those ages wrought in their several ways to the same end; as for instance, the spirit of chivalry, which readily adopted the idea of devotion to 'our Lady.' From whatever causes, the efflorescence of the cultus of the Blessed Virgin during this period is distinctly marked.

When, three centuries later, the time came for appeal to Scripture and to the records of primitive Christianity, this abnormal development of religion stood convicted of novelty and condemned as an unlicensed human invention; and it was one of the indefensible corruptions which the Reformation put away. But papal infallibility was pledged to it; it had become incorporated with the Roman system, and was in many ways suited to its genius. So within the Churches of that obedience it has made even greater advances, absorbing in large proportion the popular devotion. Conspicuous in effigies, in liturgies, in the eloquence of the pulpit, in bulls and pastorals, it has been crowned in the present age by a new article of the Faith. On December 8th, 1854, there was promulgated at St. Peter's by Pope Pius IX., amid all the splendour of the Papal Court, as an article of faith to be rejected by no Christian, except at the peril of his eternal destiny, the Doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary.

3. 'And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord.' How refreshing is the note struck by these quiet, simple, womanly words as we pass away from those accretions and excesses! They carry us from the domain of turgid superstition and debased theology, and place us in the presence chamber of free and open human experience. Mary is greatest, not as the Bride of God, not as the Madonna with a dead Christ on her knees, not as the Mother of Pity endeavouring to shield mankind from the wrath of her Son, not as the Protectress of this or that section of the community, not as the Queen of Heaven, but, so far as the Holy Scriptures or any other evidence which is worth five minutes' consideration reveal her to us, as the most faithful and humble, the most patient and loving of women, but a woman still—just a good woman. And yet, having said that,

it is bare justice to admit that, looked at from the historical standpoint, the worship of the Virgin Mary marked an immense advance upon similar pre-existing idolatry. The idolatry of the Jews was the deification of cruelty and vice. The idolatry of the Greeks was the deification of beauty and intellect, sometimes favourable to virtue, more often to wickedness. The worship of Mary is at any rate the deification of goodness. Mr. Lecky has pointed out that 'It is a striking illustration of the qualities which prove most attractive in woman that one of whom we know nothing except her gentleness and her sorrow should have exercised a magnetic power over the world incomparably greater than was exercised by the most majestic females of Paganism. Whatever may be thought of its theological propriety' he goes on, 'there is little doubt that the reverence for the Virgin Mary has done much to elevate and purify the ideal of women and to soften the manners of men. It has had an influence which the worship of the pagan goddesses could never possess, for these had been almost destitute of moral beauty, and especially of the kind of moral beauty which is particularly feminine. It supplied in a great measure the redeeming and ennobling element in that strange amalgam of religious, licentious and military feeling which was formed around homes in the age of chivalry, and which no succeeding change of habit or belief has wholly destroyed.'

When, an unwitting angel, I
  Assumed the *Ave*, and again
Closed that whole past of prophecy
  Which rules each love's collateral strain,
What word but this hadst thou for me,
Ecce ancilla Domini!

Surely the earlier Gabriel heard
  But a provincial dialect,
Then care not though in thee the word
  Some common accent did affect:
Religion knows thy cry and thee,
Ecce ancilla Domini!

Thy life, that, taught beneath the law,
  Hardly a newer sweetness lacked,
Alert, the approaching heavens saw
  And bound them to fulfil their pact.
Breathless, thou sprang'st to them and me,
Ecce ancilla Domini!

I lose the angel from my sense—
  What angel can with thee compare,
Since, for that swift heart's recompense,
  Himself the god established there?
Yet clasp and cling, O more than me!
Ecce ancilla Domini! [1]

4. Exasperation at the honour done to the Virgin Mary need not prevent us from showing her the honour that is her due. Some 'reverent regard,' says Bishop Pearson, should be had to her in view of her 'singular privilege,' and surely also in view of that grace which is better for souls than any dignity, and which had begun to work in her before she was told that she should be 'overshadowed by the power of the Highest.' After all, she was, and she is, what our first English service-book called her, 'the Mother of Jesus Christ our Lord and God,' the human instrument through whom the Eternal Word, in His own Divine and changeless personality, 'became flesh.' that is, 'became man.' Can we suppose that, because others think of her overmuch, her Son's will is that we should forget her? He checked her, no doubt, when she interfered, though ever so gently, with the order of His own public work: perhaps we may think that He thereby intimated that she was to have no public office with regard to His Church in the future. But surely He still remembers her motherly care of His childhood, and the 'piercing of her soul' when she stood with St. John beside His cross. 'Thou hast found favour with God' was the testimony of the angel when he hailed her as 'high in the love of Heaven,' —if we may follow Milton in his version of what our fathers called 'the Salutation.'

Whereto shall we liken this Blessed Mary Virgin,
Fruitful shoot from Jesse's root graciously emerging?
Lily we might call her, but Christ alone is white;
Rose delicious, but that Jesus is the one Delight;
Flower of women, but her Firstborn is mankind's one flower:
He the Sun lights up all moons thro' their radiant hour.

'Blessed among women, highly favoured,' thus
Glorious Gabriel hailed her, teaching words to us:

[1] C. Williams, *Poems of Conformity*, 44.

Whom devoutly copying we too cry 'All hail!'
Echoing on the music of glorious Gabriel.[1]

Mary's Blessedness.

Luke i. 28.—'Blessed art thou among women.'

THESE words are omitted in some of the ancient manuscripts and the Revisers have removed them to the margin. But although they lack the fullest verbal authority, their thought is undeniable, being expressed in verse 48, 'All generations shall call me blessed'—whence comes the title, 'The Blessed Virgin Mary.'

The blessedness of Mary is found first in her womanly character, and next in her Divine call.

1. *Her womanly character.*

(1) When we come to ask wherein the blessedness of Mary's womanhood consisted, the first answer is, in *its exquisite purity*. It is as the Virgin Mary she is spoken of in the creeds and remembered by the world. From the moment when she appears upon the stage of action we see in her an affecting simplicity, a delicate flower-like purity, which distinguishes her and makes her the queen of women; and it is this conception that has sunk deepest into the minds of the great artists who have endeavoured to limn those unknown features. There is not a single painter who has violated this tradition. Mary always looks upon us with the placid gaze of an untroubled purity, the grace of mingled innocence and sorrow, the charm of a soul undefiled and separate from sinners; and in this she is the type of all that is highest in womanhood; the crown and sum of what womanhood can be in its noblest development and most regal grace.

¶ There is in the National Gallery of London a picture which has always impressed me, and which has quickened and refreshed my imagination for many years. It is the picture of St. Helena receiving the vision of her martyrdom. She is asleep, and a most moving and exquisite tranquillity fills the face, as with a gentle light. The heavy eyelids have faint purple shadows round them, the full, eager lips are gently parted, the brow is smooth with the benediction of repose, the pose of the figure is full of a pathetic languor; and above her, seen through parted clouds, is the impending Cross. The whole secret of womanhood is in that noble figure; for the purple shadows speak of suffering, the broad, calm brow of thought, the full lips of vigorous life, while the dress falling in its simple folds speaks of voluntary poverty, the drooped, unringed hand of renunciation, of work well done, of calm and quiet pulses, of a lovable austerity. There is no tremulous prophetic aureole upon the brow, nor is one needed; we know at once this woman is a saint. We know at once what that deep languor means: it is the repose of one who works so unrestingly for others that when sleep comes it is a Divine exhaustion which draws the soul forth gently into starry visions. Yet it is no ethereal saint we see. There is a breadth about the figure, suppleness and grace that speak loudly of a healthy life. The gladness of the sun has passed into that smiling face, and the freshness of the earth, and the glow of human hopes. But what we chiefly feel as we gaze is the vital force of purity which streams like a subtle magnetism from the figure. Base thoughts are not possible in the presence of this woman. If those lids lifted we know well what we should see: the clear, untroubled gaze of a wise innocence, which would pierce into our souls, and shame us out of mean and evil passions. And it is thus that every woman should impress the world. It is the gift of every woman who is true to the innocent thoughts of girlhood to carry with her an atmosphere of purity which brings with it cleansing for the world. And thus the humblest woman may be a saint, enthroned within some sacred niche of the temple of humanity, and inspiring reverence for all that is good and true and beautiful, because she herself is reverent of purity, and truth, and goodness.[1]

(2) The second element in the blessed womanhood of Mary was *her tenderness and meekness*. We cannot doubt that the charm of that home at Nazareth was in the tenderness of Mary. We know that with His brethren Christ had little in common; but between the Divine Son and the blessed mother there was a bond of perfect sympathy. She alone understood Him. There were angel presences, angel messages, and human prophecies, and the many significant signs of a Divine childhood which she pondered in her heart. It was not possible for a mother to forget those marvel-

[1] Christina G. Rossetti, *Verses*, 86.

[1] W. J. Dawson, *The Church of To-morrow*, 217.

lous occurrences which surrounded the birth of her Child. There was the link of a Divine secret between them, a secret, which, no doubt, she imperfectly comprehended, but which would certainly colour her relationship to Him with a strange tenderness. And her meekness was conspicuously displayed on the very threshold of His ministry. When the hour had come for His first miracle, the hour had also come for the renunciation of her maternal rights in Him. Henceforth He was the world's, not hers. He was the Son of Man, not the Son of Mary; and the merely human bonds which bound Him to Nazareth were snapped, and snapped for ever. He knew that when He said, not with rude abruptness, as we often imagine, but with a sigh of infinite love: 'Woman, what have I to do with thee?' It was Christ's farewell to the home. Henceforth He had no place to lay His head, and to that irreconcilable separation she assented with perfect meekness. She knew that His obedience to her was ended. In a moment the relations were reversed, and she obeyed Him. She assented without a murmur to this obliteration of her rights of motherhood, and it is the voice of an exquisite womanly meekness which says, 'Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.'

¶ When I want to interpret meekness, I think of my mother, and of all that motherhood means. I see her taking no place in the restless publicities of life, but moving contentedly in the sphere of household toil, with fingers that were often weary but rarely rested, and a spirit which recognized no drudgery in the service of life. I see her, not incurious on the controversies of the hour, but turning from them to the contemplation of God, and reposing in meek reliance on His word, while others doubted and deserted. I see the spectacle of the infinite considerateness of motherhood, and you have seen it too; and what does it teach you if not this, that it is the obedience of woman to the instincts of her heart which makes her life a blessedness, and the meekness of woman in her religious faith which keeps alive the pieties of life? The triumph of woman's obedience is the human home, where daily tasks win neither wealth nor praise, and the value of her meekness is its capacity for faith. It was only a woman, I think, who could have written:—

I ask Thee for a thoughtful love.
Through constant watching wise,
To meet the glad with joyful smiles.
And to wipe the weeping eyes,
And a heart at leisure from itself
To soothe and sympathize.

I would not have the restless will
That hurries to and fro,
Seeking for some great thing to do.
Or secret thing to know;
I would be treated as a child,
And guided where I go.[1]

(3) The third great quality of Mary was the quality of *silent service*, and this is the third element of her blessedness. It is not enough to say that the glory of woman is that she is the helper of man. No great cause succeeds without woman. No nation can be great that does not reverence woman, and does not offer the freest scope and sphere for her influence to be felt. You cannot all find your mission in the slums, in the prison, in the hospital; but you can attain the private sainthood of self-denial and sympathy; you can find some sick sister to whom your visit would be sunlight; some little child to be made cheerful with your love; some obscure spot of earth to be brightened by your charity. You cannot row out against the darkness of the night, as Grace Darling did, to rescue the shipwrecked; but you may find next door to you some forlorn soul, tossed in the wild storms of life, to succour and to save. You cannot find cloistral seclusion, as the virgins of the early Church did, nor is it well you should; but you can make the nursery a cloister where the fruits of God ripen; and the store, the school, the home, a place where the fragrance of holiness may be felt.

2. *Her Divine call.*

(1) This Divine call, God's call, is to be closely associated with her character. For God does not choose His instruments at random, and we cannot but believe that Mary was of all women the most fit for this sublime task. She was the chosen woman of the chosen race; the one heart in the world to whose love, authority, and strength God was willing to trust His Son. We think of it as an honour that she was so chosen, and

[1] W. J. Dawson, *The Church of To-morrow*, 219.

so it was. But what a burden it was all through! And how sharp the trial to begin with! It implied the possession of moral resources as great as they are rare. But the Virgin of Nazareth put perplexity aside and abandoned herself to God for the fulfilment of His promise. 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.' Mary's great exaltation rests upon the surrender of self, and is beautiful for its humility.

(2) What the call was we know. She herself recognizes the greatness of it in her song of praise. The character of Mary is most fully exhibited in the Magnificat: 'My soul doth magnify the Lord.' This stands as the appropriate link between the Old and New Testament. So far as wording goes, it is borrowed almost entirely from the Old Testament. Mary's mind was steeped in the Holy Scriptures, and they came to her lips in moments of exalted feeling. She was the centre of the hopes of Israel. The faith that had sustained the saints from generation to generation beat high in her heart. The illumination, the piety, the patriotism, the joy in God which were the ancient glory of Israel made her great. But there is a spirit in the Magnificat which belongs to the new rather than to the old era. It is the voice of one to whom the promises are not far off, but fulfilled. Mary hears the acclamations that are to greet her in age after age. Yet it is not of herself that she speaks, but of God Almighty, all holy, all merciful, all faithful, of God who puts down the mighty from their seats and exalts those of low degree. Her mind and her song rest on Him and on His mercy and faithfulness.

Blessedness.

Luke i. 28.—'Blessed art thou among women.'

I am not proud—meek angels, ye invest
New meeknesses to hear such utterance rest
On mortal lips,—'I am not proud'—*not proud!*
Albeit in my flesh God sent His Son,
Albeit over Him my head is bowed
As others bow before Him, still mine heart
Bows lower than their knees. O centuries
That roll, in vision, your futurities
My future grave athwart,—
Whose murmurs seem to reach me while I keep
Watch o'er this sleep,—
Say of me as the Heavenly said—'Thou art
The blessedest of women!'—blessedest,
Not holiest, not noblest—no high name,
Whose height misplaced may pierce me like a shame,
When I sit meek in heaven![1]

Was Mary blessed among women? Was the angel's message grim comedy or sublime mystery? To the eyes of our natural understanding the whole history reads like a tale of consistent and complete defeat, and the promptings of our unenlightened minds would lead us to rear a broken column of scarred marble over such a grave, with a sculptured pedestal depicting the despairing agony of a broken-hearted mother. Such would be man's verdict, but such was not God's; neither is it ours who can now see the entire sequence of Mary's lot. Even we can now see that Mary was highly favoured; but we have learned to look where we least expected it for the source of her blessedness. She did not get precisely what she expected. There was no crown, no court, no visible empire. But there was something better. There was a cross to which all generations might cling for succour and safety; there was a grave which unlocked all other graves; there was a broken body from which emerged healing power for dying souls. And therein did Mary discover her blessedness.

1. Let us look more closely at this. Jesus Christ, as we now know, was born to die. His mission was to become the bread of life to dying men, and such bread could be made only after the bruising and grinding of the grain. His life was to enter into and to assimilate itself with the life of others, and such a resurrection could only follow a sacrificial death. He came into this world, not, as most lives do, for a career and history of their own, but that He might emancipate and enrich the lives of others. That was His work, His value. A task such as this necessitated life among men, a life of earnest and sympathetic ministry; but it did not demand either a long life or a life crowned with visible tokens of success and happiness. Above all, such a life was incomplete without death; a mission like this could never have been wrought in the person of one who ran the allotted course with the usual satisfactions

[1] E. B. Browning, *Poetical Works*, 241.

and accompaniments. His must be a vicarious life as well as a vicarious death. The one must be a preparation for the other. Without either the whole would be incomplete. Hence Jesus lived long enough to create influences which His death was to sanctify and establish. Then He died, His death representing not a mischance but a foreseen and essential event in His career; and from that career have sprung results and possibilities in the light of which we may well say that the mother who bore Him was highly favoured in her maternity.

2. It is true that the life of Mary would make but a poor plot for a saleable fiction; it is outwardly too sad, too tragic, and closes with a parting rather than a wedding scene. But the very truth of it which ruins it as a popular fiction makes it valuable to men perplexed with the hard problems of suffering and disappointment, for it points to the truth that the grave which closes over a promising life does often open to men a wealth of sustenance not otherwise to be reaped. Mary, disappointed at every stage of her Son's life, and called to stand by an early grave, did yet find that her blessedness consisted not in having but in losing Him, because only by the hallowing touch of death did His life pass into bread for a dying world. Thus did God bring more blessedness to Mary out of her Son's grave than is enjoyed by others at the birth of a first-born. For her not only was it 'better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all'; it was best of all to lose her Child that she might more truly find Him in rich after-fruits of world-wide blessing.

3. Here, if we will look calmly enough, we shall find light to dissipate some of our own perplexities, to solve the enigma of young and promising lives cut off in blossom. It is undeniable that God has planted in our hearts a natural desire for the outward harmony and completeness of lives which are dear to us. We long to see our daughters grow into the grace of womanhood, our sons into youth and manhood. We desire to see them marry and become the centres of new families. Our hope is that as wife and mother, as husband and father, they may live to brighten other lives and to complete the usual course of human experience. We expect to witness them enjoying the use of all their powers in a field which offers abundant scope. And we wish for them that after a useful and honourable life they may wane into a sunny autumn, which shall find them full of fruit and ready for the reaper's sickle. And with such wishes as these every thought of early death strikes us with dismay as a blight and failure, as a waste of power and a robbery of love.

But the life of Christ and of His mother surely helps us to a truer interpretation of these early deaths. There are lives which are framed on the model of our Lord's, lives like His in respect of their seeming defeat, but which have also this preciousness and this value in common with His, that they were sent into the world for no career of their own, but that they might become the bread of a larger life to others. According to their measure their lives are vicarious. Though giving great promise outwardly, they attain no success, they reach no summit of service, to justify their coming here at all. They seem to warrant a charge of waste, or indifference, or even cruelty, against the Creator. They come, they live and grow, they give promise and win affection, and then they go. But they are God's channels of enrichment to those who are to remain. They are the links by which He binds our earthly lives to heavenly sympathies and aspirations. What would life be without these links? Would earth's families be richer, happier, without these holy bonds to the invisible and eternal? It is well for us that so many lives find their crown in heaven rather than on earth, and that the hopes and loves which our children formed in us are often crossed on earth that they may with greater potency raise our thoughts to heaven. And so the child who came and smiled upon us and went away, the daughter whose marriage bells were never heard on earth, the son whose noble powers blossomed here to bear fruit elsewhere, the wife who gave us a breathing type of her love and left it as a memorial, the patient sufferer whose young life bled drop by drop away—these, and such as these, are sent here for no personal life, are sent rather as God's ministers for the purification of others. It is expedient for us that they go away. Out of the bruising of the grain we get the bread of a higher nourishment. And our blessedness consists as much in the departure of such as in their advent.

We will shed no despairing tears over them. We will give heartroom to no atheistic sorrow. We will raise no broken columns over their graves. Their young lives were perfected by their early death. God fulfilled a gracious purpose in them and used them for high ends. We will bless Him for the gift of all such, for all that makes their memory elevating, and for the link they now supply to unite us to the unseen world.

Just such a note of triumph is sounded by Masefield in his story of the great failure of Gallipoli. He describes in these words the beginning of operations in the Peninsula. 'Ship after ship, crammed with soldiers, moved slowly out of harbour in the lovely day, and felt again the heave of the sea. No such gathering of fine ships has ever been seen upon this earth, and the beauty and the exultation of the youth upon them made them like sacred things as they moved away. All the thousands of men aboard them gathered on deck to see, till each rail was thronged. These men had come from all parts of the British world, from Africa, Australia, Canada, India, the Mother Country, New Zealand, and remote islands on the sea. They had said good-bye to home that they might offer their lives in the cause we stand for. In a few hours at most, as they well knew, perhaps a tenth of them would have looked their last on the sun, and be a part of foreign earth or dumb things that the tides push. Many of them would have disappeared for ever from the knowledge of man, blotted from the book of life none would know how—by a fall or chance shot in the darkness, in the blast of a shell, or alone, like a hurt beast, in some scrub or gully, far from comrades and the English speech and the English singing. And perhaps a third of them would be mangled, blinded or broken, lamed, made imbecile or disfigured, with the colour and the taste of life taken from them, so that they would never more move with comrades nor exult in the sun. . . . But as they moved out these things were but the end they asked, the reward they had come for, the unseen cross upon the breast. All that they felt was a gladness of exultation that their young courage was to be used. They went like kings in a pageant to the imminent death. As they passed from moorings to the man-of-war anchorage on their way to the sea, their feeling that they had done with life and were going to something new welled up in those battalions; they cheered and cheered till the harbour rang with cheering. As each ship crammed with soldiers drew near the battleships, the men swung their caps and cheered again, and the sailors answered, and the noise of cheering swelled, and the men in the ships not yet moving joined in, and the men ashore, till all the life in the harbour was giving thanks that it could go to death rejoicing.' [1]

The Virgin and Child.

Luke i. 30.—'And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour with God.'

In nothing can we see the feeling of a generation or a nation better than in the subjects of its art. If we go into a great collection of modern pictures—say the Royal Academy—we shall see that the subjects of the pictures are very various, representing almost every department of modern life. That is because nowadays there are so many interests that appeal to people that they must show themselves in contemporary art. But turn into an old picture gallery—for example, the foreign rooms of our National Gallery or, still better, one of the great Continental collections—and you will see a very different state of things. In them you will find the masterpieces of the world's art, and the striking thing is that their subjects are almost entirely religious. Those great painters saw that the contemplation of holy things was the most ennobling occupation of the human mind, and it is because they recognized this that they produced the finest pictures the world has ever known.

But there is a very remarkable fact about these great religious pictures. There is one subject which is more common among them than any other. It is not our Lord on the Cross, as we might expect, or the Ascension, or any of His miracles, or the incidents of His Passion, or even the institution of the Holy Communion. It is the Virgin and Child. The actual incident of the Annunciation is not very often painted, though it sometimes is. But any visitor to one of these great collections of pictures would say that the central object of Christian art was the Blessed Virgin Mother with the Infant Saviour. It is on the spotless Babe, much more than on the

[1] John Masefield, *Gallipoli*, 33.

sinless Sufferer, that Christian art has fixed its gaze. And this circumstance, which cannot be accidental, has brought the person of the Blessed Virgin Mary into great prominence. Now this prominence of the Virgin and Child is important for three reasons.

1. First, it is *important doctrinally*. For it shows that the central fact of our redemption is the Incarnation, rather than the Crucifixion, of our Lord. His death on the Cross was the most important result of His Humanity, as His resurrection was the supreme proof of His Godhead, and the Ascension the emphatic assertion of His eternal Priesthood. We simply could not think of His finished work with either of these great events left out. But the great truth which includes and is behind them all is the fact that He became Man at all—in other words, the doctrine of the Incarnation. Thus the spectacle of the Infant Saviour, 'conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary,' very God and very Man, is rightly held up as the object of Christian adoration.

2. Secondly, the Annunciation is *important historically*. Its historic importance lies in the fact that a humble Jewish maiden was chosen for the unique honour of being the mother of our Lord. This fact struck the keynote of our Lord's earthly ministry as one of poverty, humility, and service. It was in direct contradiction to the Messianic expectations of the Jews. They thought the Messiah would be a great King. He was, in His earthly aspect, a humble carpenter. And His mother was of the same rank in life as the good old man who was His reputed father. Thus the Annunciation was a sign to her to whom it was made, and to all who heard of it, of the character of the kingdom which our Lord was to establish on earth.

3. Then, thirdly, the Annunciation has a *practical importance*, as having effected one of the greatest reforms which has ever been made in the social life of man. One of the chief differences between Christian and heathen, civilized and savage, communities is to be found in the position of women in each. In Christian and civilized nations women are treated with respect. The usages of society so completely take this for granted that we are apt to think that it must always have been the case. But as a matter of fact, in most ancient nations, and in those modern countries which are not professedly Christian, the position of women has been a sad one. They are looked on merely as the servants of men, as existing to minister to their wants, and as having no rights of their own. What has brought about this remarkable change, which is one of the most justly valued features of our civilization? Simply the Christian religion. And in the Christian religion the Annunciation is the special and immediate cause of this reform. It may be called the Magna Charta of womanhood.

¶ What a low ideal the world held of women when Mary came into the world! In the Jewish Prayer Book of that day the sentence occurred: 'Blessed be God Who has not made me a woman.' Woman has had to fight for her freedom all through the ages, and with difficulty has she won it. But is there now no danger of reaction? Have we not reached a point when there is no little danger of women becoming masculine, or of using their newly gained power capriciously? What is the true glory of woman? It is to bless the world. That could not be said of some women to-day. They flash through the atmosphere like meteors; they are brilliant and attractive, but they do nothing to enrich and bless the world.[1]

But we want women, strong of soul, yet lowly,
With that rare meekness, born of gentleness,
Women whose lives are pure and clean and holy,
The women whom all little children bless.
Brave, earnest women, helpful to each other,
With finest scorn for all things low and mean;
Women who hold the names of wife and mother
Far nobler than the title of a Queen.

Women who do not hold the gift of beauty
As some rare treasure to be bought and sold,
But guard it as a precious aid to duty—
The outer framing of the inner gold;
Women who, low above their cradles bending,
Let flattery's voice go by, and give no heed,
While their pure prayers like incense are ascending;
These are our country's pride, our country's need.[2]

[1] F. C. Spurr.
[2] Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

The Annunciation.

Luke i. 31, 32.—'And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.'

IN the Annunciation, and in Mary's apprehension of it, three points are prominent: (1) the name Jesus; (2) the Messianic reign; (3) the Divine Sonship.

1. The name Jesus, Saviour, contracted from the longer form which meant 'Jehovah saves,' being thus ordained in heaven, would be to many, as it is to us, the declaration of the essential character of the work to be done for man. But the salvation is left in its vagueness and vastness, not explained to her, as it was afterwards interpreted to Joseph by the words 'He shall save his people from their sins.' The name was an implicit prophecy, and events would not only fulfil but interpret it. Time would show to her and to all believers in what sense, in what measure, and by what means, He whose name was called Jesus would prove the Saviour of the world.

2. If the salvation is left for the future to explain, so also is the Messianic reign. The language adopts the original promise of the Kingdom, keeps in line with national prophecy, and conforms to contemporary expectation. The throne which Jehovah will give to Jesus is that 'of his father David,' and His reign will be 'over the house of Jacob for ever.' Thus the Annunciation links the future to the past, and suits its intimations to the mind to which they are addressed. Time will prove what this throne of David and house of Jacob typify, and how they will be realized in a kingdom which shall have 'no end.' Meantime the limitation of the language remains as evidence of the truth of the narrative. No one could have thought of putting such words into the mouth of an angel after Israel had crucified its King, or after the great catastrophe which made a throne of David impossible and left the house of Jacob a ruin.

3. The communication of the third mystery, that of the Divine Sonship, is also under definite limitation. 'He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest.' That might be as a title of special adoption and exaltation among the sons of men. But explanation follows. It shall be His by nature, by conception and birth, by an immediate operation of 'the power of the Highest.' 'Therefore,' it is said, 'that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.' The Church will know another reason for that title, and confess Him in another sense as 'the only-begotten Son of God, begotten from everlasting of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father.' But the Annunciation makes no mention of this mystery. There is nothing said of Divine nature or even of pre-existence. Here the Divine Sonship is that, not of eternal generation in the Godhead, but of temporal generation in the flesh. The mystery of the Incarnation is not revealed to her who is its mediating instrument. The sublime truth will be known when all is over, but cannot now enter into the imagination of the thoughts of her heart. It would have made impossible the cares and duties and natural feelings of a mother, and would have been incompatible with the normal development of the human nature, and with the predestined course of the manifestation in the flesh. That which transcends thought is to make its way into the mind by steps and proofs. There is nothing premature in the communications of God, and therefore the secret of the Incarnation of the Eternal Word is not made known to the mother who brings Him into the world.

The Virgin Birth.

Luke i. 35.—'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee.'

THERE is no part of St. Luke's Gospel that is more disputed at the present time than the narrative of the Virgin Birth of Jesus. Let us briefly consider the arguments for and against.

1. *The arguments against it.*

(1) The belief in Virgin Birth is of much

greater antiquity than is commonly supposed. It is not specifically of Christian origin, and was foreign to Jewish modes of thought; in fact, it is more Greek than either, and has affinities with both Egyptian and Hindu religious ideas.

(2) It plays only a subordinate part in the New Testament, for it is not mentioned in the Epistles, which in their present form are older than the Gospels, and even in the Gospels themselves it finds no place in the oldest stratum. St. Mark does not refer to it, and St. John—though obviously acquainted with all the others—deliberately passes it over. Indeed, in the first chapter of the Fourth Gospel there are two remarks which seem to indicate that the author did not hold the doctrine in any literal sense. The former is the statement: 'But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' Here the inference is plainly that Divine Sonship has nothing to do with any phenomenal mode of entry into this world; it is independent of flesh and blood. The second remark is that attributed to Philip later in the chapter: 'We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.' Evidently, then, even in the sub-apostolic age, when the Fourth Gospel was written, belief in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ was not universal among the Christians. As for the apostolic tradition, we cannot get farther back than the words of the Apostle Paul: 'When the fulness of the time was come God sent forth his son, born of a woman, born under the law.' Here is neither affirmation nor denial of a miraculous birth, but the presumption is that if the Apostle had heard of anything supernormal in regard to the advent of his Master and Lord he would have said so.

(3) It does not require much perspicacity to see that the Nativity stories in St. Matthew and St. Luke do not correspond, and they contain certain internal discrepancies also. For example, the genealogies given are both of Joseph, not of Mary, and differ widely from each other. What has Joseph's pedigree to do with the matter if Jesus was not his own son? In the third chapter of St. Luke, too, in which this genealogy is given but which, in the judgment of many expert scholars, is of older date than this first chapter, the list of names opens with the announcement: 'And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph,' etc. The three words 'as was supposed' are entirely out of place in the setting, and are therefore rightly regarded as an interpolation by a later hand with the purpose of harmonizing the chapter with the two which appear in front of it in the version of the Gospel which we now possess.

(4) Why should birth without a human father be considered more sacred than any other kind of birth? To say it is puts an unmerited slur upon human parentage, and gives a fictitious honour to something utterly abnormal. Again, we might ask, What has the flesh to do with the matter? 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.'

> Whatever was begotten by pure love,
> And came desired and welcomed into life,
> Is of immaculate conception.

It ought not to be overlooked that at the time Christianity made its appearance in the world the belief was widely current, especially in Greek circles, that persons of exceptional genius were of heavenly paternity. Alexander the Great encouraged it in his own case by allowing people to state that he was the son of Zeus, not of King Philip of Macedon. We know, too, that mythical heroes, such as Hercules, were almost invariably said to be born of a divine father and a human mother. There is nothing at all surprising about the fact that a similar supernatural origin should have been asserted of Jesus, as soon as Christianity began to spread in the Greek-speaking world.

2. The arguments for it.

(1) It has been very often suggested that there is a constant human tendency to decorate with legends the births of heroes and great men, and that this is probably only a legendary accretion upon the beginning of the life of the great Saviour, Jesus of Nazareth. Now, no reasonable man can doubt the tendency to decorate with legendary glory the cradles of heroes, and there is no man with historical knowledge but knows

that the tendency was at work about Jesus of Nazareth. Your eyes may fall from time to time upon some volume of the Apocryphal Gospels, as they are called, and if you will open them you will see that they date from a very early day, and they represent to us exactly what the ordinary Christian imagination was able to accomplish when it set itself to work to fill up the vast and impressive vacant spaces which are left by the Gospel before and after the nativity of Jesus. You read those legends—they are not much better, they are not worse, than the legends which you would find about other human heroes of history; but they are about as like the opening chapters of our Gospels as is the mock thunder on the stage like the voice of God in nature, or as is the moon upon the stage like the moon in the midnight heaven. No; the virgin birth of Jesus is no mere unnecessary legend; it is part, a part inseparable, of the Person and the work of Christ. It is based on sound and solid evidence; it is in inseparable connection with the moral fruits which are to flow from the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was born and lived and died. The earliest Christian instinct perceived this, and irresistibly you trace back the traditions of the Christian creeds to sub-apostolic days. But everywhere, whether in the Jewish Christian circles from which those beginnings of our Gospels come, or in the great heathen centres of Antioch and Alexandria, this virgin birth of Jesus is lifted into that pre-eminence which it holds in our creed to-day—He was born of the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary.

(2) If you look in the Gospel of St. Mark, which represents the earliest Apostolic preaching, you find no mention of the Virgin Birth, and that for a reason which, when you consider it, is pre-eminently satisfactory. In the New Testament immense stress is laid on witness; the Apostles were to be personal witnesses, they were to speak of nothing which they had not with their own eyes and ears heard and seen. Therefore, that earliest apostolic preaching was rigidly confined to the period of their witness, from the days of John the Baptist until the day when Jesus was taken up into heaven. That was the period; anything outside that would have intruded itself as an alien element, and would have marred the strength of the ground on which they stood—the ground of eye-witnesses. And once more, this virgin birth of our Lord was not meant to be part of the grounds on which people came to believe in His person; it was the will of our Lord that they should come to believe in Him simply from what they saw and found in Him; from the works He did, from the words He spake, and from the evidence of His death and of His resurrection—and so it was in fact. And still to-day, if any one desires to reconstruct the Christian faith and look at the evidence, he had better give the go-by first of all to the question of our Lord's nativity, and direct himself to the moral claim of the evidence of His death and His resurrection. But let your imagination go back to the day when that first group of Christians were around the first apostolic witnesses in the city of Jerusalem. There were some five or seven years of quiet before the persecution about Stephen began to scatter them. For some five or seven years of quiet they were around the Apostles, they were built up in their belief in Christ, and they were anxious to learn. Is it conceivable that the Apostles themselves, is it conceivable that these eager, earnest listeners would not have sought to know something about the circumstances of the birth of our Lord, in whom they had come to believe?

Now there were only two sources from which knowledge could come—Joseph and Mary. Joseph, it appears, was dead; but, careful as he was about the reputation of his wife, knowing, as he must have known, that the question would come into consideration, we can hardly believe it possible that he would not have left—being able to write, even as Zacharias could write—some memorial, some document with his family, which in any case of question or suspicion would have cleared the character of his wife. Now read the opening chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. It is hurried over by the Apostle in his dominant interest in the fulfilment of prophecy; but look at it—what is the basis there? You cannot doubt that that is nothing else than the information of Joseph. Everything is from Joseph's side—his intention, then his perplexity, the doubt in which he was left, the hesitation how he should give the intimation of what was happening, his consequent conduct, the change in his plans, how he took measures to preserve the safety of the Holy

Family and fled into Egypt, how he returned and settled down in Nazareth. Beyond question, if a document can bear on itself the traces of its origin, that first chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel comes from Joseph. There was one other source of evidence, and that was Mary. Mary was among the Apostles; she was there meeting with them day by day in that upper chamber. Read now those early chapters of St. Luke in their supreme beauty of simplicity, and you cannot but see that, if there is truth in them at all, they can have come from only one quarter; and the document bears upon itself all the marks which it ought to bear if it did come simply from the information of Mary, who had kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Mary, with her mingling of loyalty and modesty, probably felt that the time had come when they ought to be known. St. Luke introduces his Gospel with a characteristic preface. He not only says that he has trustworthy information, and that therefore he is the best person to write down the account, but he specifies that his trustworthy information begins from the very beginning, and then he plunges into this document, clearly not his own, and not altogether in a Hebrew style, a document which bears upon it the impress of the hope of Israel before it had been dashed down by the fact that Israel rejected the Christ. Those early chapters of St. Luke could not have been written after Israel had rejected Christ, and that rejection has not cast its shadow over those early chapters.

(3) But it is no doubt a fact that historical evidence never does impress the mind to the point of conviction unless there lies there antecedently an expectation—a sense of probability about the fact to which witnesses bear evidence. Consider, then, of what sort this fact is. You will find that it is inseparable, you will find it the more inseparable the more closely you examine it, from the character and personality of Jesus. For what strikes you about that personality—what has struck all men, half believers no less than whole believers—is the sinlessness, the personal sinlessness, of Jesus of Nazareth: 'The Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me'—'which of you convinceth me of sin?' What was the attitude He took up towards sin? It was that of the stronger man who spoils the strong man Satan, and who deprives him of his goods. Never do you find in Jesus that which belongs to every human soul—that response towards the solicitations of temptation which, like a traitor in a camp, opens the door of our being in the hour when evil besieges us and lets in the foe. That was absent from Jesus. He was in all points tempted as we are, made in all points like unto His brethren, but with this great and tremendous exception—apart from sin, without sin. And you mark the contrast! Mark how every saintly man in proportion to his sinlessness has spoken of his own sinfulness in terms which seem exaggerated or ridiculous, because they lived nearer to the Holy God, and, living nearer to the Holy God, they felt through and through their being the stain and pollution of ingrained sin. Sin does not begin at the life of the individual; it runs back, it is inherited, it is in us—'in sin has my mother conceived me.' There can be no question that that which the unchristian poet called 'the ineradicable state of sin', that boundless upas, that poisonous tree, that ineradicable taint of sin does in fact belong to our nature; and as you contemplate the sinlessness of Jesus, sinless in His own conception of Himself, sinless in the estimate of all generations, you behold something which, in the strictest and most exact sense of the term, is a moral miracle. Humanity in its ordinary course could not have produced a sinless man. And then you turn to all the considerations which advancing science suggests to us, and it would assure us that this moral miracle would be impossible unless there were in fact some physical miracle associated with it to account for it. For we know that there is nothing in our moral nature which is not bound up with our physical nature, and we know that there can be nothing moral or spiritual which is not intimately correlated with our physical structure. And this moral sinlessness must have meant, if it was a fact at all, something in the physical birth of Jesus which exempted Him, as in moral so necessarily in physical conditions, from the ordinary sequence of human heredity.

(4) Not only is the virgin birth of Jesus bound up with the character of His personality, but it is also bound up with our Lord's whole conception of the moral method of His Kingdom. He was a fresh start. Now, when you begin to examine, you will find that in the history of the world men always desired reform, and the shallower look to

some departmental or superficial reform in this or that department of life, but the deeper claim something more radical and more profound. He stood there, Jesus of Nazareth—the second Adam. He was a new start for human life, for He exhibited a humanity in power, in freedom, in purity, in glory, altogether adequate to the highest conception which men could form of what their human nature needed and was capable of. And watch His method. The crowds came round Him, they pressed upon Him with an eager sort of half-belief; but with a stern and awful severity He, as it were, puts them aside—He tries them, He sifts them with stern measures. Jesus would not commit Himself unto any man. He probes them, He sifts them, until at last, out of that eager crowd there are left, as it were, but the twelve disciples, and they were sifted and sifted until they were taught to exhibit a trust in Him, an absolute confidence in His person, a readiness to leave all and follow Him, to begin again utterly from Him. And in that readiness He sees something which can at least be consolidated into a rock-like consistency, and become the foundation of His new Kingdom.

Blessing and Blissful.

Luke i. 42.—'Blessed art thou among women.'

In the mediæval zeal for the cultus of the Blessed Virgin, every circumstance connected with her, imaginary as well as real, was made the occasion of a Festival in her honour; among the rest was a Festival of the Visitation.

The Festival of the Visitation was instituted by Urban VI., and was promulgated by his successor, Boniface IX., A.D. 1389. It was again established by the Council of Basle 1441. Its purpose is to commemorate the visit of Mary to Elisabeth before the birth of the Baptist at Juttah, or, it may be, Hebron. As it is a Scriptural fact that is commemorated by it, the Festival is retained in the Anglican calendar in spite of its late date.

'Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda.' Evidently the journey was taken soon, yet not immediately, after the visit of the angel, as appears from the expression 'in those days.' Probably there was a time for the expectation of faith to become a conscious experience. But she went with haste. No wonder. She was urged by the great secret which could not be explained, and which, if explained, could not be believed, thus bringing on her soul an oppressive weight of glory, and on her name an impending burden of reproach. Was there in all the world a person to whom this confidence could be made, and to whose sympathy it was possible to appeal? Yes, there was one. 'Behold, thy cousin Elisabeth.' She too has a part in the history which is begun. She will understand. She will believe. Far off, in the hill country of Judæa, there is a house where relief may be found from the silence of secrecy and the solitude of the heart. Therefore she 'arose and went with haste.'

1. What an unexpected welcome met her! No need to think how she shall explain her coming, or how the almost incredible communication will be received. It is anticipated by an inspiration. At the first sound of her voice, a sudden sensation thrills Elisabeth in soul and body, stirring the new life which she bears within her as with a transport of joy. Instinctively she knew its meaning, in connection with the one great thought which possessed her mind. In few words, we may suppose, Mary told what she had to tell, for to such information the blessing which follows seems in one place to be responsive. Then 'filled with the Holy Ghost,' with a great cry, an elevated tone which bespeaks spiritual possession, Elisabeth lifted up her voice, and said:

'Blessed art thou among women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.
And whence is this to me,
that the mother of my Lord should come unto me?
For behold, when the voice of thy salutation came
into mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.
And blessed is she that believed;
for there shall be a fulfilment of the things which
have been spoken to her from the Lord.'

The words have the lyric tone which betokens inspiration; yet they are hardly a song, and have no place among the Canticles, being strictly limited to the occasion, and the mutual consciousness of maternity. But the maternity, being in each case instrumental to the revealed purpose of God and to the highest interests of mankind, the

expression of womanly fellow-feeling becomes also one of prophetic blessing.

2. The blessing is expressed twice by two very different words, which are rendered by one and the same word in English. In 'Blessed art thou among women' there is the occurrence of the word eulogemenē (perhaps first used by the angel), announcing benediction from God. In 'Blessed is she that believed' there is the more frequent word *makaria*, declaring the happy condition of the person to whom it is applied. The two together form the twofold character of blessing bestowed and blessing enjoyed; the one by the word of the Lord, the other through the faith which receives it.

The participle *eulogemenos* is rare; it occurs elsewhere in the Gospels in only two connections: 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord' (Matt. xxi. 9, and xxiii. 39); and 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you' (Matt. xxv. 34). The more familiar word *makarios* is employed in the Beatitudes and is in frequent use. The one expresses benediction, the other felicitation. The one is the equivalent of the Hebrew *baruk* (as in Gen. xiv. 19), the other of *'ashrē* (as in Ps. i. 1). The one is rendered in Latin *Benedictus*, the other *Beatus*. In English they might be distinguished by the respective use of 'blessed,' and 'happy'; but the latter word was probably felt by our translators to be inadequate in dignity and sacred associations. So the word 'blessed' has in the New Testament been used for both ideas. It may be observed, in the present connection, that in the Magnificat, the prophetic saying, 'All generations shall call me blessed,' is expressed by the verb 'shall count and call me happy'; and so is rendered in the Vulgate *Beatam me dicent omnes generationes*, whence the perpetual title 'Beata Virgo Maria.' In English we might perhaps use 'blessed' and 'blissful.'

There was, on the Virgin's part, a direct, immediate acceptance of the revelation made to her; and it was in this sense that she became blessed before God and man—because she took what God bestowed. Many of us who claim to be already enriched with all riches in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, and already to know something theoretically about the unsearchable riches of Christ, are not 'blissful.' And why? Because our part has not been performed, as the Virgin's part was. The moment the angel told her that she was to be the mother of God's own Son, she bowed her head and said, 'Be it unto me according to thy word'; and from that moment, there was acquiescence in the word of God, and acceptance of the provision of God. There was joy and rest of soul in the fact that God had dealt with her, and that she now had received of God what He was pleased to bestow. What is wrong with our lives to-day is that we have not, as the Virgin had done, given our adhesion to God's provision, accepting what God is pleased to reveal to us. She was blessed because she believed, 'for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.'

3. What did she believe? Could anything be imagined more marvellous than that she, the simple peasant of Nazareth, uneducated and of lowliest position, should be constituted, by God's providence, the means of bearing the Saviour forth to the world, a Child who was to be called the Son of the Highest; and should understand that this Son of the Highest was to inherit the throne of David, and to become hereafter King of the whole earth; and that, moreover, she who was, perhaps, the poorest and feeblest that could be chosen was to be in this way the honoured vessel of God's magnificent power and love? Every single thing was against her, and yet she could at once reply, as she did, 'Be it unto me according to thy word.'

Surely, the moment the angel began his address, Mary's mind would go back to Isa. ix. 6, 7, and she would humbly lean upon the sure word of prophecy. Doubtless she did; but if you say, as you rightly say, that Mary owed it to God's word of prophecy that she could believe the moment the message was brought to her, what shall we say of ourselves? We have infinitely more than the word of prophecy that she had; we have the actual facts, the revelation of God's perfect Saviour; we have the knowledge of an ever-present and, in most of us, an indwelling Spirit of God, and the glorious certainty that our Lord is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him. We have the glorious assurance that He is with us, that He is in us of a truth, that He never will

leave us for one single moment. Yet to Mary we turn and say that she was compelled to believe, because she had the prophets. What then shall be said of us, who have the gospel and the prophets, and, moreover, the Holy Spirt Himself working in us to reveal the truth of God in all its magnificent fullness? Surely Mary will rise up to condemn us.

The Magnificat.

Luke i. 46.—'And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord.'

To St. Luke we owe, with many other precious details of our Lord's Nativity, the earliest Hymns of the Christian Church. And what an immense debt this is. Try to imagine our spiritual store bereaved of the Nunc Dimittis, the Magnificat, and the Benedictus. And even they, precious though they be, are but a fraction of our special obligation to this beloved physician who has compounded under the Spirit's direction so much wholesome medicine for the healing of the sorrows and sins of human hearts. 'He was a physician,' says St. Jerome, 'and so, too, all his words are medicines of the drooping soul.'

1. If the song known as the Magnificat be indeed the outpouring of the soul of the mother of our Lord, it is impossible to over-estimate its importance. It is a revelation of the character of the woman who gave to her Son, our Saviour, all the share He had in our human nature. It contains the first rough draft of Christianity—that conception of it which was pressed on the spirit of Jesus, while as yet momentous issues were unsettled, and the battle of the Temptation was unfought. It will therefore, at the least, open up an interesting line of speculation if we attempt to define the features of the primitive Christianity of Mary, and the line will bring us to solid ground of certainty and edification if we go on to consider how these features lived again in the Christianity of Christ.

(1) Noteworthy, to begin with, is the evidence of what may be called the higher ambition. She exults in the prospect of her immortality in the minds and affections of mankind. 'From henceforth', she cries, 'all generations shall call me blessed.' Ambition it is, but the ambition to be held evermore in affectionate remembrance. She exults in the prospect of deathless fame; but it is joy at the assurance of being encompassed by the sunshine of measureless human love and gratitude. And this form of ambition Christ Himself encouraged. He promised Mary of Bethany that wheresoever this gospel should be preached the thing she had done in anointing Him for His burial would be told for a memorial of her. Nay, was not the master-passion of His own Divine heart just a great hunger for the trust and the love, not only of those He called friends, but of races unseen, and of generations unborn? Wherefore, on the last night of His life He took means to make doubly sure the mother's assurance of His immortality in human hearts, when after supper He took the cup and said, 'This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.' To the lower ambition, which grasps at notoriety, Christianity does not simply oppose the injunction to despise it. It sanctions ambition, if only we will seek affection and gratitude instead of applause. It allows the desire of posthumous fame—at least, of the kind which will draw some genuine mourner to drop a wreath or a tear upon our grave.

(2) Another significant feature in Mary's hymn is the patriotic touch: 'He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy.' The soul of Mary is not enclosed by four walls and the overarching heaven. She is not a pre-Christian nun, whose days are divided between her simple home duties and still communion with God. She has the wider outlook and the larger sympathies of the patriotic Jewesses of old. She is, in a word, the mother of Him who acknowledged no commission for Himself but to the lost sheep of the House of Israel, and who wept over Jerusalem as a mother weeps over the ruin of her first-born and her pride. The love of country had no mean place in the doctrine of the old school of love at Nazareth.

(3) The most remarkable feature of the Magnificat, however, is its ascription of a startling element of revolutionary passion to the character of the Virgin. In passionate exulting language she sings a hymn of praise to God as the Author of revolutions. 'He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath cast down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of

low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.' Honestly interpreted, it is nothing more or less than revolutionary exultation, and the plain inference is that the speaker was one whom the established order of things moved to a burning righteous indignation. The words suggest, far more closely than is commonly supposed, that Mary may have been touched by the world's sorrow, and may have deeply brooded over man's inhumanity to man. The traditional theory of Mary's history is that God set her, as it were, in a bower of roses, and kept her there far aloof even from the sight of blasting sin and crushing sorrow. But a very different course of experience is at least possible. The sword may have pierced her long before the days of her motherhood. There were times when power practically meant injustice, when wealth meant luxury and sensuality; and if we suppose, as we easily may, that the rapacity of the tax-gatherer had left her homeless, that she had looked upon the grandeur and the riot of conquerors and remembered that it was by the spoil of the poor, that she had herself blushed at their insolence, or that some who stood nearest to her by kinship had been entangled in patriotic conspiracies, and had paid the penalty in the dungeon or on the cross, then we can well understand that the accumulated indignation of years would naturally find expression in the exultant cry that the Messiah who was to come was one who would turn the world upside down. A burning, righteous indignation at the abuse of power and wealth by their present possessors undoubtedly finds voice in the hymn, and as certainly the same capacity of fiery indignation was one of the distinctive characteristics of the Son. The bruised reed He would not break, the smoking flax He would not quench; but in presence of the traders who desecrated the Temple, of the saints who made long prayers at the street corners and returned to devour widows' houses, the lightning flashed from His eye, the curse fell from His lip. And the spirit of the Master is the spirit of the disciple; if the sun never goes down upon our Christian wrath, it is not likely to go down upon much Christian love.

¶ In the Life of F. W. Robertson of Brighton we are told that the indignation with which he heard of a base act was so intense that it rendered him sleepless. 'His wrath was terrible, and it did not evaporate in words. But it was Christ-like indignation. With those who were weak, crushed with remorse, fallen, his compassion, long-suffering, and tenderness were as beautiful as they were unfailing. But falsehood, hypocrisy, the sin of the strong against the weak, stirred him to the very depths of his being.' 'I have seen him,' writes one of his friends, 'grind his teeth and clench his fist when passing a man who, he knew, was bent on destroying an innocent girl.' 'My blood,' he writes himself, after a conversation on the wrongs of women, 'was running liquid fire.'[1]

2. The revolutionary conception of Christianity which is embodied in the Magnificat anticipates in Messianic times a complete reversal of the existing religious and social order. What is up comes down, what is down comes up. The great factors of civilization—light, power, wealth—are to be taken from those who now have them and given to those who have them not. The wisdom of the proud is discredited. Princes are dethroned and mean men are crowned. The rich are beggared and the poor are filled. That these bold conceptions are the real contents of the passage is undeniable, and they, besides, represent the aspect in which the new age would most naturally appear to the high-souled daughter of an oppressed people. How bold they are is seen at a glance by comparing them with the passages in which the Apostles allay the suspicions of those in authority as to the political and social bearings of Christianity. It remains to consider to what extent the expectations of the mother became the purpose of the Son, and how far her prophecy has been fulfilled in the dispensation of His Spirit.

(1) The picture of the Messianic age thus outlined predicted in the first place *an intellectual revolution*. It prophesied the downfall of those who had hitherto lorded it in the pride of intellect and learning. 'He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.' Human wisdom would no longer fill the seat of spiritual authority. The philosophers and the Rabbis would no longer teach the people, but the true light would spring up among the unlettered multitude, and the children of the people would teach the Rabbis and the philosophers. In this sense it

[1] *Life and Letters of F. W. Robertson*, 159.

was frequently formulated by Christ when He had tried the spiritual guides of Israel and found them blind. 'Thou hast hid these things,' He cried, 'from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.' And again: 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise.' And the fulfilment of the prediction is the plain historical fact that Christianity was cradled among the common people, and that it fought its way to its imperial position against the long-drawn opposition of literature and philosophy. Its first teachers were drawn from humble trades; for generations its adherents were recruited mainly from the ranks of the poor and ignorant; and it was only when it had added the argument of success to the other evidences that intellect and learning in general submitted to the sway of Christ. Nor is the observation of the early debt of Christianity to the multitude without a bearing on our own problems. It suggests that there is Christian sanction for the doctrine that the voice of the people, at least when taken on issues of justice and mercy, is the most trustworthy of the echoes of the voice of God. It suggests, further, that attacks upon Christianity with the weapons of science and philosophy are far less formidable than is commonly supposed. The truth of Christianity is in a real sense a people's question. Christianity was not set up by science or philosophy, and neither will it be demolished by them; it gained the millions because it seemed to them to satisfy their deepest needs, and it will hold them until a better way is found of meeting God, of fighting sin, and of conquering death.

(2) In the song of Mary the Messianic age is next represented as an age of *political revolution*. 'He hath put down princes from their thrones,' the Revised Version has it, 'and hath exalted them of low degree.' In its original setting it doubtless meant that the kings of the earth would yet bow the knee before One who was the son of a village girl. But the prediction has been still more literally fulfilled. More and more, when Christ is worshipped, princes tend to become mere ornaments of the commonwealth, and the power passes into the hands that dig and spin. In addition to the downfall of princes, the song speaks of a redistribution of wealth. 'He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.' This startling utterance the Church began by fulfilling to the letter. The poor were fed by the deacons, and the rich left their wealth in the hands of the Apostles. This experiment was, however, of brief duration, and during the next long period the working ideal of the Church was merely to tone down the more glaring inequalities of condition by a lavish charity. In the present century the strength of Christendom has been put forth, in perhaps unexampled measure, for the relief of every form of poverty and distress. Whether the reduction of the inequalities of life ought to be carried further, and on different lines, is the problem of to-morrow. It is, however, practically certain that as the world grows older and as the spirit of Christ grapples more closely with human affairs, there must ensue a far more general apportionment of reward to merit, and a far more general distribution of the good things of this life. Inequality must always exist—inequality of power, because an army is useless without captains and generals; inequality of wealth, because one man will always be thrice as valuable to his kind as another man; but the hope—and more than the hope, the assurance—of those who have followed the drift of human progress is that the days of unearned privilege are numbered. There will be an aristocracy, there will be a plutocracy, of the future; but their members will owe their position neither to birth nor to good fortune, but to the service of man. He who is greatest in the commonwealth of the future will be he who has rendered it the most signal service.

¶ Christ is now by growing multitudes being accepted as having something really to say about the social order, about the true way of living. In His light these people are coming to see that there is no greatness at all but that of the soul; that, as Francis in the thirteenth century said, 'A man is as great as he is in the sight of God and no otherwise.' They see, too, that the business of man is to find his greatness, not in ambition, but in service; not in increasing the distance between himself and his humbler brother, but in lessening it; not in climbing to fashion's gaudy pinnacles, but in reaching downwards to where the needy are and helping them along. Upon these people has dawned the amazing fact—hid for centuries in a theological tenet, but now seen as incarnating the

one and only social law that humanity's greatest soul humbled Himself, took deliberately His place among the labourers, accepting their lot, pouring His soul into theirs, living and dying for their happiness. That truth has at last come, and we shall never again let it go. It is to remake the future, and the process is beginning. It is to be our politics, our social code, and that because it is at last to be our religion.

One of its first effects will be in a new doctrine of equality. That doctrine will take account of all the natural inequalities. Society will still have its eminences. Man will not be defrauded of his upward look. But the eminences will be true ones. Intellect, gifts, moral worth, achievement—all will get their due. There will be room for them, made more ample by the carting away of pasteboard dignities. But what, in this arrangement, will be the equality to be sought for? It will be the equality in the means of happiness, in the means of human well-being. For we are discovering our essential kinship—discovering that we cannot be well, be happy, unless the whole of us is happy and well.[1]

¶ The other day a wonderful spectacle was seen in a busy part of the great city of London. Shrouded by a fog, a funeral procession, preceded by a brass band playing the Dead March, came to a halt, and the traffic was held up while a white-robed clergyman read a prayer. The funeral was that of a flower-girl, Fanny Collins, whose good deeds followed her to the grave. When any girl engaged in her occupation was in trouble or distress Fanny was summoned to her aid. One hundred flower-sellers formed a guard of honour at St. Clement Danes, where the service was held, and as the coffin passed they strewed the ground with petals from white narcissi and saffron mimosa. The hearse, too, was adorned with their tributes of white blossoms. It was beside Fanny's stand in Ludgate Hill that the procession halted. A great crowd stood reverently, the men with uncovered heads, while part of the service was conducted there by the rector of St. Clement Danes. Greater honour could not have been done to a prince.

3. The question remains: What was the attitude of Christ towards the sentiments embodied in the song of Mary? Were these hopes His hopes? Were the expectations of Mary the aspirations of Christ?

It is at least a curious coincidence that Jesus is never weary of re-echoing the sentiments above imputed to Mary. With Him, too, the lofty will fall, the lowly will rise: 'Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.' Similarly too, as if in docile recollection of the mother's words, He sends away empty the rich young ruler, and adds: 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!' Striking, however, as is the coincidence of language, the point of view is totally different. Jesus, too, is a revolutionary, but the revolution He primarily works for is within the limits of the individual soul. His belief was that, if only the individual were revolutionized, the political and social revolutions would take care of themselves. Christianity has, indeed, a revolutionary temper, but it is primarily concerned with a revolution in individual character. It lays its finger on your conscience and mine, and says, Let the world alone in the meantime while we consider you. Has God begun the revolution in you? Has He scattered the proud imaginations of your heart? Do you claim to be rich and to have need of nothing, or do you confess that you are poor and miserable and blind and naked? Are the things of low degree exalted within you? Have you learned to estimate at their true low value the things that are mighty in the eyes of the world, which are mainly position, wealth, success, and to exalt above them the lowly graces of Christ, which are patience, meekness, gentleness, humility, long-suffering, faith, hope, love? Christianity is nothing if not revolutionary. Where it will end we know not now. But we know that it demands of us that we turn from our idols to God and make His will ours.

¶ Wherever the primitive Gospel has been proclaimed by men possessed of its spirit, however crude the mental envelope in which it has been wrapped, it has exercised this extraordinary power—the power of changing men, of turning them upside down and inside out. It has accomplished the fact which Schopenhauer declares impossible—of making bad men good.

Amid all the clashing of modern belief and non-belief; amid all the assaults which are made to-

[1] J. Brierley.

day on the citadel of religious orthodoxy, there is one thesis about which, we imagine, all fair-minded men would be found to agree. It is that some such force as this, wherever it is to be found, is the one thing we need for the reorganisation of society, for the attainment of human well-being. Amid all our sciences the one needed science is that of making men good. It is an age of machinery, but none is being invented for turning brutal, drunken, wife-beating men into sober citizens, into kind-hearted builders of homes. Any Socialist who can see farther than his nose-end must recognize that his State scheme, however cleverly organized, can come to nothing so long as his material is bad. Is there in the whole Socialist machinery, even if it work overtime, a means of producing 'love, joy, peace, gentleness, meekness, temperance, faith'? Until it can, it must cease boasting of being, in itself, a new highway into the human paradise.

Wrapped up often enough in crudest forms, Christianity has nevertheless vindicated itself as the agent of that greatest of miracles, the reformation of character. It has accomplished the one thing which neither law, nor police, nor science, nor material conditions has been able to achieve; it has given men in all circumstances, even the worst, the sense of inward peace and blessedness.[1]

Though Christ in Joseph's town
A thousand times were born,
Till He is born in thee
Thy soul is still forlorn.
The Cross on Golgotha
Can never save thy soul;
The Cross in thine own heart
Alone can make thee whole.

¶ Every nation has what is called its national hymn, but the Magnificat is the hymn of all peoples. It is the hymn of humanity, the hymn of all parishes. In every local commune of the Western nations where the wholesome customs of the Church are kept this hymn is said or sung every afternoon. For at least twelve hundred years this has been the practice of the Churches. The parishes or communes of Christendom—those old, local, secular societies which become by baptism the congregations of the Church—are far older societies than the national Kingdoms and Republics; so this local parish hymn, the Magnificat, is much more ancient in its use than any of the so-called national hymns, such as 'God save the King,' or 'Rufst du mein Vaterland!' or the 'Marseillaise.' It will outlive them all. For every so-called national hymn has war, competition, the murderous destruction or crippling of sister nations, as its actual or implied motive, while the Magnificat has as its motive the scattering, disappointment, and depression by God's Son of those classes in every nation which make wars, which thrive by them, which stir up unbrotherly hatred and competition between people and people . . . those three castes whom Mary calls 'the proud,' 'the mighty,' and 'the rich,' against whom the Everlasting Father, as He says by the incarnation of His Son, has declared war.

No such revolutionary hymn, no such socialist song, has ever been sung by angry crowds as that which is so quietly and unsuspectedly said or sung in thousands of Christian Churches. What is more wonderful is that it is said or sung daily by the proud, the mighty, and the rich themselves to their own condemnation. If there had not been a tacit assumption amongst us all that its words are not to be taken in their plain meaning, that it is the business of the clergy to spiritualize away its three terrible contrasts—the moral contrast, the political-social contrast, and the economic contrast—into meaning something distant and unreal, would not the police, in some lands at least, have prohibited such words from being publicly said or sung? 'This carpenter's wife,' they would say, 'is exciting the parishes to revolution. Her so-called hymn is nothing less than a disguised socialist warsong.'[1]

[1] J. Brierley.

The Romance of the Incarnation.

Luke i. 46, 47.—'And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.'

THE chief and immediate impression which the Magnificat makes upon us is one of joy. For sheer, overflowing gladness there is scarcely any hymn, ancient or modern, to compare with it. R. L. Stevenson says that 'the ground of a man's joy is often hard to hit.' The context of the

[1] T. Hancock, *The Pulpit and the Press*, 23.

saying is the famous passage about the lantern-bearers—the boys of the village in the dark evenings of autumn, with their bull's-eye lanterns buckled to their belts. His point is one which penetrates far into our human nature—that a large part of the joy of life lies in its romance. Romance is an elusive thing, hard to define. It retreats like a rainbow. It flits like a butterfly. It lurks in all manner of unexpected and unlikely corners, and it refuses sometimes to rest on couches luxuriously spread for its entertainment. A schoolboy may find it with the aid of a smoky lantern; a poet may discover it in the spring, or in his lady's eyes; a saint will seek it amid the eternal things. But wherever it is, if we can discover it, we discover joy along with it. Now the Magnificat may be said to have for its theme the Romance of the Incarnation. That is why it is so full of gladness.

Before we are more than over the threshold of the song, we meet three facts which are brimful of romance. They are God and the soul, God and the humble, God and the ages.

1. *God and the soul.*—'My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.' God and the soul, God possessing the soul, and the soul rejoicing in God and His salvation—these things seen and understood are rich in a romance beside which all poets' dreams and travellers' tales pale their ineffectual fires. Here are discoveries. Here are quests and conquests. Here are treasure-mines and beacon-fires. And herein lies a large element in the romance of the Incarnation. It is God drawing near to the souls of men. It is God taking His chosen way of appealing to the human soul. We marvel at the gentleness of that way—not with pomp and circumstance, not with thunder and the sound of a trumpet, but in the lowliness of a little child. But we acknowledge the reasonableness of the way—clothing the Divine Purity and Love with flesh and blood for men to see and follow, so that they might be reached through their consciences and affections. These Songs in the Gospel of the Infancy are an expression of the way in which some souls at least leaped forth to greet the God who loved their souls. And such hymnody will not be too ecstatic for us, if we have seen the same romantic thing—the worth of our souls to the heart of God and the price He paid to make them His own.

¶ We need to get back to the pure praise note in life. More 'Te Deums' and less of the introspective hymns to which we have been accustomed; more 'Magnificats' and less of mere poetry, which to the deepest soul means nothing. Pure praise lifts us clean out of ourselves and immerses the spirit in the eternal light and the eternal love. It is not simply that we sing the words of the song. Nor do they pass away when our lips cease to utter them. They return upon ourselves and enter into ourselves until life becomes deeper and fuller and richer.[1]

2. *God and the humble.*—The second element in the romance of the Incarnation is God and the humble. The Magnificat is the song of the humble—those who have neither pomp nor pride, neither power nor wealth, but who lay their own souls as their offering at God's feet. This hymn is the anthem of their triumph, the charter of their vindication. 'He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and hath exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. Here the romance of the Incarnation largely lay, for the first generation of Christians at least: God passed by the great and the mighty; it was to the humble, the quiet and the poor, not to those who wore the purple and wielded the sword and made the world ring with their heavy tread, that He gave the immediate honour and joy of receiving His unspeakable gift.

Here is the revelation of a standard of judgment and a test of values other than those that prevailed among men. The privileges of God's Kingdom are not for the people of the purple robe, but for those of the contrite heart. The control of the future and the leadership of the world's history—they are not in the last resort for the sword and the throne; they are for the people, whether they be on the throne or in the cottage, who hunger for righteousness more than for bread. The Kingdom that shall endure for ever—it is not Herod's; it is not Cæsar's; it is the heritage of the Babe in Mary's bosom, and of all whom this little Child shall lead into gentleness, truth and love. It was said in praise of

[1] F. C. Spurr.

Rousseau: 'He makes the poor very proud.' Christianity does not make the poor proud, but it makes them blessed.

3. *God and the ages.*—A third element in the romance of the Incarnation is here. Let us call it God and the ages. The tramp of the feet of the generations is heard in the rhythm of the song. The storied past is here: 'He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; as he spake to our fathers.' But the storied past is only the prelude to an illimitable future: 'from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.' And here are the magic and the mystery of the whole course of Time—full of change yet full of God, full of earthquakes, landslips, and revolutions, yet over-arched by a sky which cannot fall, and underbuilt by the things which cannot be shaken: 'His mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.'

That is why we, even after so long a time, need not be shut out from the primal joy; when Mary sings *Magnificat anima mea,* we may join our hearts with her clear voice. Are not we also among the hungry, among those whose poverty is their plea? And, believing as she believed, are not we also among Abraham's seed and heirs according to promise? So Time shrinks and his barriers crumble. Faith and love have their way of access. The God of our salvation is willing now, as then, to help His humble folk in remembrance of His mercy. It is wonderful. It is romantic. But it is true. 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.'

It is quite true that every sentence sung by Mary was borrowed from the Old Testament. But what of that? Can we not borrow the words of others and give to them such a personal application as stamps them henceforth for our own? May I not borrow from the hymns of others a line that fits my own need, and, though it was written by others, hundreds of years ago, pass it through my own personality and become its second author? He who wrote the 23rd Psalm, for instance, is, of course, its original author; but every person who can in experience say 'The Lord is my Shepherd' also becomes its author. In the secondary, and in the personal, sense, whatever of an author's you take and make your own becomes yours by that stamp of personality which you place upon it. The fire of Mary's singing makes those old words, all of which were the work of others, new and original for her. And when we in turn sing her words, in so far as we make them ours they do for us what they did for her—they lift the soul to a higher region and make us doubly aware of the wonderful power of God.

A Hymn of Praise.

Luke i. 46, 47.—'And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.'

THIS, the first strophe of Mary's Hymn, is a burst of 'praise.' And we may note here three matters for consideration.

1. There is, to begin with, the fact that in the order of Mary's thoughts the praise of God comes first. To give God His due is not, with Mary, an afterthought; it is not appended to something relating to her friends or to herself. In Mary's soul God takes precedence of all besides. And therefore, in her hymn, the praise of God takes the lead of all other topics. This, be it observed, is the case although her Hymn is also an answer to the congratulations of a near relative. She is replying to Elisabeth, but she instinctively, inevitably, turns the eye of her soul upwards. She addresses her first words to God.

Begin the day with God!
  He is thy sun and day;
He is the radiance of thy dawn,
  To Him address thy lay.

Sing thy first song to God!
  Not to thy fellow man;
Not to the creatures of His hand,
  But to the glorious One.

Take thy first meal with God!
  He is thy heavenly food;
Feed *with* and *on* Him; He with thee
  Will feast in brotherhood.

Take thy first walk with God!
  Let Him go forth with thee;

By stream, or sea, or mountain-path,
Seek still His company.[1]

2. Then Mary praises God with all the faculties and resources of her spiritual being. 'My soul doth magnify,' 'my spirit hath rejoiced.' 'Soul' and 'spirit' are not two different names for the same thing. When St. Paul prays that the 'whole spirit and soul and body' of the Thessalonian Christians may 'be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,' he does not use three words where two would have sufficed. No doubt, alike in Biblical and in popular language, both 'soul' and 'spirit' are sometimes used alone for the whole immaterial part of man; as when our Lord asks, 'What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' or when the Preacher says that 'the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.' But when, as here, the words occur together, in more or less obvious contrast with each other, they stand for the lower and higher parts of that invisible half of man which accompanies his body, yet is distinct from it. Soul is nearer to the bodily nature; spirit nearer to the nature of God. Soul in a man is analogous to the higher life of the animals; the animals have in them nothing that corresponds to spirit. Soul receives impressions both from the external world and from the spirit; and so, as here, it utters through the bodily organs that thought or emotion which has previously been present to spirit. Soul is the seat of passion, of imagination, of impulse; spirit, while, as we see in this Hymn, it is, like pure thought, capable of sublime joys all its own, is specially the seat of the self-measuring and reflective reason, of memory, of deliberate and imperative will. Soul, it is plain, lives not far from the frontier of the things of time and sense; spirit belongs to a sphere on which the things of time and sense need not, and often do not, intrude. Between them soul and spirit include the whole incorporeal nature of man, with all its powers; and Mary summons them all, the highest and the lowest, the faculties which traverse the world of sense, and the faculties which live among the highest and most abstract truth, to the solemn work of praise. Her 'soul' must magnify the Lord, because, as she sings, her 'spirit' has rejoiced in God her Saviour.

3. Lastly, observe the title under which Mary praises God—'My Saviour.' 'My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.' This designation, although associated by Christian faith in a special manner with our Lord Jesus Christ, is much older than the New Testament. It grew naturally out of Israel's faith in God's Providence. 'It is thou that savest us from our enemies' was the voice of the chosen people from age to age. But the enemies were generally political foes, and the salvation was victory in the field or deliverance from bondage. This outward and temporal salvation was indeed also a religious salvation. Israel was the people of God; the defeat of Israel was the defeat of the cause of God; the victory or salvation of Israel was the victory or the triumph of that cause. But it is probable that a new impulse was given to this more spiritual meaning by what would have seemed to pious Jews the profane assumption of the title of Saviour by the pagan kings who, after the death of Alexander the Great, founded dynasties in Syria and in Egypt. If henceforth Saviour was to be applied to the God of Israel, it must be in a lofty and spiritual sense; and thus Mary praises God as the Saviour, not of her country from temporal ruin, but of her own soul from eternal death. The expression cannot be explained by the clause, 'He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden,' which, while it assigns the motive for Mary's praise, does not explain the title she gives to God. The honour put on her by the Incarnation might be described by many other names. But high office is one thing, personal salvation another; and if Mary calls God her Saviour, it is for reasons independent of the rank and duties which He has assigned to her.

Unique as was Mary's office, magnificent as was the endowment of grace bestowed on her, singular as were her humility, her purity, her likeness to the Most Holy, she has and she needs a Saviour. She does not stand outside that universal law that 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.' Hers is not a soul which finds its way to the courts of heaven without recourse to that one 'name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.' There is in fact no intermediate position in the kingdom of grace between the Saviour and the saved, no

[1] Horatius Bonar.

neutral post in which nothing is received and from which nothing is bestowed. There is one Saviour, and all others are simply saved, be their place in the spheres of glory what it may, and whatever the graces that may have been here bestowed on them. Mary owed, and owes, what she was on earth, what she is in heaven, no less entirely to the merits and the precious blood of her Divine Son than does the humblest Christian among us at this hour; and she offers the best praises that her soul can offer to God, not as manifested first or only in the awful attributes of knowledge or power, but as her Saviour.

The Good Things of the Eucharist.

Luke i. 53.—'The hungry he hath filled with good things.'

Why do we come to Holy Communion? What do we receive when we come? The text answers both questions.

1. We come because we are hungry. The Lord's Supper is a meal, and only those can enjoy a meal who feel hungry. This is plain enough in the life of the body. Food, we all know, as a rule, benefits neither man nor beast unless there be relish or appetite for it. This is also true of our spiritual nature. What food is to the body, that religious truth and the supernatural grace of our Lord are to man's highest nature, to his undying personality, to his spirit. Religious truth forced upon a soul which has no desire, no appetite, does not illuminate and satisfy; it only provokes a secret or avowed hostility. The soul must desire God as its true life, its true force, if God is to enlighten and strengthen it. Without this desire a communicant will be sent empty away.

Other tests and conditions have been and are being emphasized and enforced in the Church. The acceptance of human definitions and explanations concerning the true nature of the Lord's Supper, or certain modes of administering the sacraments and similar tests have been laid down as conditions for admission to partake of the emblems of the Lord's body and blood. Sincere souls sometimes examine themselves as to whether their religious emotions are strong enough to entitle them to approach the Lord's table. All these conditions, and many others which might be mentioned, have been imposed by men and go far beyond what is written and emphasized by our Lord and His Apostles. Christ appointed a spiritual meal, reserved for His friends alone, whether they be strong or weak in faith, so long as they are true friends. He gave it to Peter, who denied Him a few hours afterwards, because He knew that at heart he was true to Him; and a careful harmony of the four Gospels shows that the Lord managed to have Judas leave the upper room before He instituted the sacrament, because it was apparent to Jesus that this unhappy disciple had become unfaithful. Hence, friendship to Jesus and hunger after the bread of life are the only conditions for partaking of the Lord's Supper.

¶ I said that it did not befit us, nor do I wish you, to do as many imprudent laymen, who pass over what is commanded them by Holy Church, saying: 'I am not worthy of it.' Thus they spend a long time in mortal sin without the food of their souls. Oh, foolish humility! Who does not see that thou art not worthy? At what time dost thou await worthiness? Do not await it; for thou wilt be just as worthy at the end as at the beginning. For with all our just deeds, we shall never be worthy of it. But God is He who is worthy, and makes us worthy with His worth. His worth grows never less. What ought we to do? Make us ready on our part, and observe His sweet commandment. For did we not do so, giving up communion, in such wise believing to flee from fault, we should fall into fault.[1]

2. But what shall we receive when we come? 'Good things,' the text says: 'The hungry he hath filled with good things.' A hungry child asking his mother for bread will not be sent away with a picture card having a loaf of bread painted on it, but he will get a slice of real nourishing bread. Now, argues the Lord, 'If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?'

(1) One good thing is a deeper and wider and truer conception of the glorious declaration of the gospel that God is love and that He gave His only begotten Son to die for us. The preparation service, the external elements of the sacrament, the

[1] *Letters of Saint Catherine of Siena*, 204.

administration, the hymns we sing—of all these things the Holy Spirit makes use for our growth in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. True faith is not only a hearty trust; it requires also a certain knowledge. In one sense the sacraments are pictorial sermons, as the Heidelberg Catechism defines them to be: 'Visible, holy signs and seals appointed of God, for this end, that by the use thereof He may the more fully declare and seal to us the promise of the gospel that He grants us out of free grace, the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life, for the sake of the one sacrifice of Christ accomplished on the cross.' What the illustrations in a book are to the text, that the sacraments are to the verbal teaching of the Bible. The words of Jesus, 'He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life,' are plain enough as explained in their context, but how much plainer, how much more impressive, does the teaching of Christ on the mystical union become when we eat the bread and drink the wine in the sacrament, and think of the strength which we gain as a result of it; and apprehend the spiritual meaning of all this!

(2) Another good thing is the strengthening of brotherly love in the hearts of believers. Partaking of the Lord's Supper is called communion, that is, a 'union with' God and our fellow Christians. In the ancient Church great stress was laid on this point. The love feast was observed, and before the elements were partaken of the priest would admonish those present to forgive one another, and then the 'holy kiss' was exchanged separately among the members of each sex. The liturgies of some churches still lay great stress on the necessity of mutual forbearance and love as a condition for the sacramental blessing promised by God. There is much coldness among God's children, and it has often been the season of communion, with all its teachings and associations, which has brought warring Christians together. We lay great stress on sound doctrine, but we should never lose sight of the truth that unlovely conduct is the deadliest heresy, the more so as in some sense it affects even our intellectual apprehension of the truth.

(3) A third good thing is an increased measure of power from on high, which enables us to bear and even to profit by the temptations and struggles of this life. Communion reminds us of the Cross and Passion of our Saviour, and that He learned obedience and was perfected by His suffering. With outstretched hand the Master stands at each communion table saying: 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' During the persecutions in the ancient Church it became customary with the martyrs to celebrate the Lord's Supper before they were led to the stake or cast to the lions in the arena. They did this because many before them in similar circumstances had experienced the strengthening and reviving influence of the sacrament in the most trying hours of their lives. For reasons sufficient to themselves, all Roman Catholic revivalists insist on frequent communion during the season of their 'missions,' and it is not all superstition which leads them to do that. Ministers have had occasion many a time to notice how at sick-beds private communion administered to suffering disciples resulted in a larger measure of patience, calmness, and self-surrender to God.

Lift up your hearts! We lift them up!
Up and still up, yea, very far
Beyond the farthest gleaming star.
Up far beyond the jar and fret
Which do our daily path beset,
Beyond the weary wordy strife
With which the world around is rife.
Up to the heights where Love hath birth,
Still up, beyond the loves of earth.
Is it too high, O struggling Saint?
Do flesh and spirit sink and faint?
One from the height hath stooped low
To strengthen thee to rise up so.
He calls thee now with Him to sup,
He breaks the bread, He fills the cup.
Lift up your hearts! We lift them up![1]

Parents and their Children.

Luke i. 66.—'What then shall this child be?' (RV).

THE answer, the simple answer which will cover ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, is, 'This child will be what its parents make it.' It is an answer which is likely to make every parent feel serious, to make even the most indifferent consider, but it is an answer which, after consideration appears more true than before.

[1] *In the House of My Pilgrimage*, 53.

Now it is a very curious fact that, as you rise in the scale of life, the offspring become more and more dependent upon the parent. Most oviparous creatures, insects, fishes, do not depend upon their parents at all when once the eggs are produced. Birds depend upon their parents as far as the hatching of the eggs, and in some cases as far as being fed while they are fledglings, but in other cases they seem independent even of that. A barn-door chicken, directly it breaks the shell of its egg, proceeds to pick up the grain upon the ground and feed itself as if it had been accustomed to do so for years. When you come into the great kingdom of the mammalia, of course, the offspring there are dependent for a considerable time upon the parents, but when you come into the kingdom of man, you find that no creature is made so closely dependent, and for so long, upon the will of the parents. No creature seems to be born with so few instincts, no creature is so helpless even to maintain life, and no creature remains for so long a period dependent upon the teaching and example and the training of those who brought it into being. What is the meaning of that? It seems as if God intended that the parent should have a really good chance of making something of the child, that every parent should have a certain opportunity of impressing upon the young plastic life the total of good which the parent knows. It seems as if God took the lower creatures into His own training, to be their Nurse, but gave over the higher creature, man, to the parent who produced it to be his nurse. The parent has an opportunity of impressing upon the child, by this arrangement, all the results of human growth and human experience, and it seems as if God says to every parent, pointing to the little child in the cradle: 'Now you can make this little child or you can mar it. You can fit it to be the heir of all the ages by shaping its character, and sowing in its soul, while it is tender, the seeds of knowledge and wisdom; or you can make it lower than the brute.' If a dog is neglected, his moral character does not seem to suffer materially; he may be as good as another dog; but if a child is neglected, it is left like an empty house, in which unclean creatures are sure to come and make their abode. That seems to be the great distinction of the human child.

¶ Which has the greater influence in the making of character, heredity or training?—the influences before birth, or those after? The question has been asked of scores of persons. It is surprising how often it has been met with hesitancy. And it is surprising, too, how indecisive the replies usually are.

Yet careful thought makes it plain, and yet plainer, that, while heredity is great beyond any power of calculation, training is infinitely greater. Or it would be better said thus: training may be made infinitely greater. Training can be made the greater, yet with the vast majority, as a matter of fact, it isn't. The bent before birth, and the chance, weedy growth after, actually make up the character of the great crowd, with training, properly so called, playing no part, because it has no chance.[1]

¶ In the biography of Pasteur, the great French scientist, we read that his native town of Dôle sought to honour him during his life-time by placing on the humble house where he was born a memorial plate. Pasteur, who was present at the ceremony, after expressing his gratitude burst into the following apostrophe.

'Oh! my father, my mother, dear departed ones, who lived so humbly in this little house, it is to you that I owe everything. Thy enthusiasm, my brave-hearted mother, thou hast instilled it into me. If I have always associated the greatness of Science with the greatness of France, it is because I was impregnated with the feelings that thou hadst inspired. And thou, dearest father, whose life was as hard as thy hard trade, thou hast shown to me what patience and protracted effort can accomplish. It is to thee that I owe perseverance in daily work. Not only hadst thou the qualities which go to make a useful life, but also admiration for great men and great things. To look upwards, learn to the utmost, to seek to rise ever higher, such was thy teaching.'[2]

There are four easily remembered truths which may be of some help to parents, especially young parents, in bringing up their children.

1. The first of these truths is this: these little children, when they come fresh into your hands, are the beloved property of Jesus Christ. By one memorable phrase He claimed them all

[1] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Home Ideals*, 236.
[2] R. Vallery-Radot, *The Life of Pasteur*, 377.

when He said, let them 'come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' The disciples wished to push them back, and, strange to say, the descendants of the disciples ever since have had a great grudge against them, and by all kinds of dogma and teaching have tried to stamp them as it were with a curse; but Jesus Christ blessed them. Following a mistaken reading of the Latin New Testament, St. Augustine taught a doctrine which laid hold of Christendom, a doctrine which is generally called that of original sin, the gist of which was that all children are born, as it were, reprobate; they had sinned in Adam, and therefore to start with they were all wrong. Over against that teaching of St. Augustine, for which there is no real authority in the New Testament, stands the simple word of Jesus Christ, 'Suffer the little children . . . to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' And if Jesus Christ said this indiscriminately of all little children, with how much more meaning would He say it of little children born of Christian parents.

2. The second truth is this: the last commandment that Jesus Christ gave to the disciples before He left the earth was that they should go and make disciples of all the world. Now if He gave that commandment to His disciples, supposing the disciples were fathers, they would feel that the first step in carrying out that commandment would be to make disciples of their own children, and when they began to speak to other men they would say, 'We want to make disciples of you, and then your first duty will be to make disciples of your children, to bring them up from the very first to understand the claims and the teaching of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' In after years children may choose otherwise for themselves—it is sadly true. We are told that even the angels in heaven fell and rebelled against God in the very presence of God; we are told that one of the twelve chosen disciples who listened to Jesus from day to day was a traitor; and it is possible, of course, that a child brought up for Christ will yet at last rebel against Him and refuse to be His. But let us at any rate discharge our part. Duties belong to us—events to God. If you have brought up your little child to know Jesus Christ as his Saviour, and if he afterwards chooses to reject Him, he will never be able to say, 'It was my father's fault, it was my mother's fault'; it will be, it must be, his own.

3. But now the third truth is this: if you claim these little children as Christ's, and if you intend to bring them up for Him to make disciples of them, you must have a home that is fit for them. It is not every home that will do for a child of God. It is not possible for all of us to make a rich home, to make a beautiful home, to make even a comfortable home; but it is possible for all of us to make a Christian home. If it is only a garret Christ may be there, for the first home He had on earth was the stall of a stable in an Eastern Caravanserai. The most exquisite description of a home in our language is in the 'Cottar's Saturday Night'; and indeed we must all know that, for many of the essential qualities of a home, a cottage is more favourable than a palace. There are three pillars which should hold up the roof-tree: unselfishness, purity, and love. Where those three pillars stand the thatch may be straw, but it will be a home. Let us grant that the father is one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection, 'with all gravity,' as St. Paul puts it; let us grant that the mother is, as he says in another place, 'a woman who knows how to stay in the house'; and let us grant also that the children have been taught to love and to serve one another, to seek each the other's good—there you have a home. Very simple! But the best thing on earth is a home so made.

¶ Home is where love lies. Not where it boards, nor pays occasional visits, even long visits, nor even where it may be a sort of permanent guest, with familiar access to certain rooms and cosy corners. But where it owns the front-door key, sits by the glow of a hearth-fire of its own kindling, and pervades the whole house with its presence. It may be a king's spacious, luxurious palace. It may be the poor man's narrow-walled cottage, or anywhere in between these two extremes.

The palace cannot make the home, nor yet mar it. The simplicity and spareness of the cottage do not bring the home, and neither can they hinder

nor disturb it. There may be present the evidences of wealth and culture and of the sort of refinement that these give, and even the higher refinement they can't give, and yet the place not be a home. And there may be the absence of all this, except that real refinement that love always breeds, and yet there be a home in the sweet, strong meaning of that word[1]

4. There is one other truth: there are many children ruined for want of the firm hand of fatherly discipline. Let young fathers never forget that. But how is discipline to be exercised? Here is a passage from the Life of John Paton: 'If anything very serious required to be punished, our father retired first to his closet for prayer, and we boys grew to understand that he was laying the whole matter before God, and that was the severest part of the punishment for me to bear. I could have defied any amount of mere penalty, but this spoke to my conscience as a message from God.' That is like God's own way of punishing His children. When God wants to punish men there is no vindictiveness about it, no injustice. What does He do? He goes to the Cross and bears it Himself, and the astonished world sees the Father lifting up the whole burden of its sin in the Person of His Son. That is the kind of punishment which He gives. If you want to punish your children rightly, go into your closet and lay the matter before God. Do not tell the children what you are doing—they will soon find it out—and when you come from the throne of God with the calm, stern simple determination to punish your child for the wrong he has done, you will hardly have to lift your hand; the punishment will lie in your very face, and the child will tremble under the sense of that mysterious authority which has been derived by the father on earth from the Father in heaven. There is no other way of giving punishment, and if there were more parents like that simple, God-fearing Scottish peasant, there would be more heroes like that missionary, John Paton.

The duties of the day, laborious, painful, with the sweet background of home always in sight; the evening closing in, the loud peals of laughter around the fire, the tales that were told, the games that were played as childhood passed into young manhood and young womanhood; the growing seriousness of the discussions as the young people were launched into life; the father's thought, the mother's tears, when they sent the boys out to the great city; the solemn hush of the gathering for worship as the day closed in, the hovering presence of angels that seemed to fly white-winged over the little bed in childhood, and that half-revealed face of God which used to look out from our mother's and our father's face—these will be the abiding memories which no chance or change of life can tear away. And to the end the most beautiful adjective in the English language will be 'home-like,' and the best description of heaven will be to say that it is the home over there.

A spirit dwells by the fireside
When the patter of falling rain
Trembles the leaves of the drooping trees
And drips on the window pane.
O, cold and grey is the world outside,
When the heav'ns grow dark above,
But within, within, at the glowing hearth
Is the tender spirit of love!

Our genius there at the fireside
Whispers a thousand things.
'O, life is drear and the world is wide,
But a brave heart soars and sings!
Tho' clouds draw round and storms betide,
Within that heart hope springs,
And here pure Faith all else beside,
Around it twines and clings!'

O, precious voice of the fireside!
Sweet spirit of calm and cheer!
Tho' the wild wind roars o'er the pathless wastes,
What matter, so thou art near?
Thy voice ne'er stills tho' the years go on,
When the patter of falling rain
Drips from the eaves and trembles the leaves
And rattles the window pane.
Holy and sacred the voice of home,
It steals to our hearts again.[1]

[1] Beatrice Clayton.

The Benedictus.

Luke i. 67, 68.—'And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel.'

In the *Diary of a Churchgoer,* Lord Courtney of Penwith describes the intellectual and spiritual

[1] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Home Ideals*, 81.

impression made upon him by hearing the Benedictus sung in church. 'The Choir to-day sang divinely the Benedictus. . . . In my boyhood, we rarely heard the Benedictus. It was in the Prayer Book, doubtless, but practically never said or sung. Nowadays it is reaccepted in use . . . nor is this surprising, for the Benedictus surely expresses the essence of all religion. . . . And is not the hymn of praise which St. Luke gathered into his Gospel one of the noblest as well as one of the simplest of Credos?' 'The essence of all religion'—that phrase may be our guide to the devotional value of this song. It is one of the treasures of our devotion. Emerson tells us of a certain statue which stood in a public garden. It was of Phosphorus, the Light-bringer, and it was full of a strange tranquillity which made men fall silent as they gazed upon it. The sculptor, before he set to work, had risen early one morning and had seen the day break, 'grand as the eternity out of which it came.' And his statue was that vision translated into stone. This poet has been out to behold a sunrise more splendid than any that ever poured its fullness over the hills of Moab or flooded Jerusalem with the light of a new day, and he has put his vision not into a statue but into a song. Because that sunrise is the central event of the world's religious development, it is full of the essence of religion. Let us look at it so.

1. Religion is a very joyful and thankful thing. 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people.' One cannot help noticing how easily and spontaneously the New Testament writers break off into Doxology. They were near to the facts: the oblivious years had not had time to bury the facts: the Birth, the Life, the Cross, the Victory were still near, they were real, they were things which hands still warm had handled and eyes still awake had seen. Perhaps we might recover some of the primitive spontaneity of joy if we too lived close, as close as believing study and loving imagination could take us, to the same fundamental facts. Canon Liddon tells in one of his sermons of a good man who lay dying, and who confessed as the great regret of his life that he had not given more careful study to the life of our Lord in the four Gospels. If we got back to those facts and really understood their meaning, we might be able to frame our own Benedictus, our own Magnificat, our own Doxology, defying the loud world to silence it.

2. If this song be evidence of the nature of true religion, true religion begins from the side of God. If religion be a song, it is God who has set the key. If it be a life, it is first a gift. 'He hath visited. . . . He hath raised up an horn of salvation . . . as he spake.' He did it!—here we touch the deep heart of things: here is the true philosophy of history and the true fountain of praise: here is the note which Paul and Augustine and Calvin, all in their day, have sounded, recalling men to the centre and source of all things. He hath visited! As of old God came to the garden, so now He comes to the wilderness: as in ancient story He came to the tent of Abraham, so now He comes to the huts and hovels of our sin: as once He came to Sinai in smoke and flames, so now He comes once more, not like the lightning but like the light. But a visitor is always dependent upon his welcome. Even God is dependent upon His welcome. In the great humility of the Incarnation He is content to wait upon our welcome. But if there is a welcome His visiting becomes an abiding: He will come and He will stay.

> No distant Lord have I,
> Loving afar to be;
> Made flesh for me, He cannot rest
> Until He rest in me.
>
> Brother in joy and pain,
> Bone of my bone was He,
> Now,—intimacy closer still,
> He dwells Himself in me.
>
> I need not journey far
> This dearest friend to see,
> Companionship is always mine,
> He makes His home with me.[1]

3. If religion in its essence is before us in this song, then religion is a historical thing. It is personal, of course, else it is nothing at all, yet it is more—it is historical. This song is saturated with history. Its margins are full of the figures

[1] M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Every-Day Living*, 173.

of storied saints and uncounted, unnamed believers: Abraham is here and David; the prophets are here and 'our fathers'; the Covenant is here and the Promise. All the mighty past is here, to be at once the seed and the shell of the future. Now we, who are neither Goths nor Vandals, can appreciate the value of this historic continuity. There is change in all living religion—the shedding of the husk and the growing of the flower, the passing of forms and the unfolding of substances, the ever-clearer unveiling of the light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. But there is also continuity, and it deserves more meditation and thanksgiving than we commonly give to it. We too write our names with humble thankfulness beneath those of Abraham and David, the prophets, the apostles, and the saints. We do not experiment with untried mysteries. We have heard with our ears and our fathers have told us. We must do full justice to their experience and not cast their witness lightly away.

4. Yet, if again we may judge the essence of religion by this song, religion is a practical thing; it makes a mighty difference to life. Notice how full the song is of words which reflect that difference. There is 'salvation'—'He hath raised up an horn of salvation for us.' There is 'redemption,' a word with history in it, with Egypt in it, with Pharaoh's chariots in it, and the Red Sea spume, and Miriam's timbrel—a word used often before, but waiting to be used again as God shall excel Himself and do something worthy to be a climax to all the past: 'He hath visited and redeemed his people.' Now, if we incline to find in such words a touch of Jewish externalism, and the thought of a visible kingdom victorious over outward foes, we shall find in this same musical company of words others which demand an ethical and spiritual interpretation. 'Holiness' and 'righteousness'—'that we . . . might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.' That would be salvation and redemption in one, if God's grace would make it so. And then, as the song sweeps on to its close, two more words come in, very short, very simple, but very rich in music and in meaning, the words 'light' and 'peace': 'to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.' The point is that we have here the expression of the assurance that a religion had come into the world with Christ which was to make a difference to life, and such a difference. If we do not know what these great words mean—salvation, redemption, holiness, righteousness, light and peace—we have need that Christ should be born in us, bringing with Him the interpretation of these things and the gift that includes them all.

Out of my unreality,
My false seeming,
My fond dreaming,
Good Lord deliver me,
And knit my heart to Thee!

Out of my instability,
Aimless action,
Frenzied faction,
Lord, bid me come to Thee,
The Hav'n where I would be.

Into Thy deep tranquillity,
Thy still Being,
Thy clear Seeing,
Lord, bring my soul at last,
This tyranny o'erpast.'[1]

Saved to Serve.

Luke i. 74.—'That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.'

In view of suggestions which go to eliminate from prophecy much of its predictive element, and to cast mists of doubt over the origin of Israel and over the very persons of the patriarchs, the Church will still commemorate, with as simple assurance as Zacharias did, the promises given through holy prophets since the world began, and the oath of the covenant sworn to Abraham our father. Moreover, those whom we commemorate as receivers and transmitters of the word of promise are not to us, any more than to Zacharias, mere names in dubious histories. God has called Himself their God, and He is the God not of the dead, but of the living. They all live unto Him; and if He has 'provided some better thing for us, that

[1] *In the House of My Pilgrimage*, 57.

apart from us they should not be made perfect,' He knows how to associate them with us in the present knowledge and fullness of salvation.

This salvation, as a present salvation to ourselves, we celebrate in the spirit of the song, as (1) a deliverance from enemies and (2) a life of service to God.

1. *Redemption from the hand of the enemy,* of which there was an earnest in the Exodus, of which there was perennial need, and which is the theme of psalmists and prophets, has its counterpart in the history of the spiritual Israel. Truly it is the foundation fact of that history. Redemption would be an inappropriate word, if there were no hostile and intrusive powers claiming right o possession in the world. In the later, still more than in the earlier, Scriptures it is felt, assumed and plainly affirmed, that for the evil state and strange course of this world there is an origin behind the will of man, a cause more operative than the imperfection of his nature. The mystery of iniquity has its source and supplies from the world of spirits, from which some power has come forth to invade, infest, and appropriate our race. So we are taught by revelation, with which the facts of the situation correspond.

In the order of righteousness, as it appears, these successes of an enemy could not be overcome by the simple exertion of power; for the consent of man had given them, so to speak, a lawful claim. Could that claim be cancelled, since man's impotence for the purpose consisted in his very sinfulness? It was an old question, 'Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captives be delivered?' And it was an old answer, 'Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children' (Is. xlix. 24, 25). How this would be was intimated in other prophecies (as Is. liii.), and was disclosed in the events, as wrought by incarnation, sacrifice, and death. In the Cross was victory and deliverance. 'Through death he' brought 'to nought him that had the power of death,' and delivered 'them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage' (Heb. ii. 14, 15). In the final act the power of the enemy was broken because his claims over us were cancelled by Him who 'redeemed us to God by his blood.' 'The prince of this world is judged.' Thenceforth we have to do with a discomfited enemy; and in our personal conflicts, serious as they are, victory and freedom are ours of right, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. So we sing praise to God who has granted us, 'that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies should serve him without fear,' as worshippers in a secure temple, and heirs of a kingdom that cannot be moved.

2. This is the life which follows—*a life of service unto God,* without fear 'in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.' This peaceful serving is expressed by the ritual word which means properly religious service as offered unto God. It includes all observances of worship and definite acts of devotion, but (in the Christian sense) these are but expressions of the habitual service of a spiritual life. So St. Paul explains the word, when he says, 'We are the circumcision, who serve (or worship) by the Spirit of God' (Phil. iii. 3); or again, in respect of the ministry, 'Whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of his Son' (Rom. i. 9); or again, 'Whose I am and whom I serve' (Acts xxvii. 23). In like manner St. Peter represents the Christian life as one of consecration and religious service, saying that we are 'an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices,' and again, 'a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that we may shew forth the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into his marvellous light' (1 Pet. ii. 5-9).

This service to God by the Church collectively, and by the members of it severally, is to be carried on 'in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.' The two words characterize the spiritual and the moral life of man as it is realized in his redeemed condition. This is the restored humanity in which the prophecies are fulfilled, and the enemy cast out, and the Redeemer glorified. This is 'the new man' which is indeed a creation of God, and is yet to be accepted and assumed by us. As it is our calling and privilege in Christ, so be it our reigning desire and daily endeavour, that we 'put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and holiness of truth' (Eph. iv. 24).

(1) *In Holiness.*—That is for God, for the glory of God. Let us remember that what God bestows upon us He expects us to use, and what we do not use we lose. 'We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.' We are God's handiwork, God has made us, re-created us in Christ, with a definite purpose. When a man makes a plough, he has a definite purpose; he intends it for ploughing, and if it cannot be used for ploughing, it is useless. When God re-created us in Christ Jesus, He had this definite purpose; it was unto good works. That is one of the most encouraging passages in God's Word in connection with service. We may feel that we are not made like that, but it does not matter what we feel. We have been recreated, and the new nature has been so made that it is exactly suited to the good works in which we have to walk. God has brought His infinite wisdom and power to bear upon that new creation, and He has not made a mistake; so that it is possible for every newly-created soul to walk in the good works that God has prepared. We know that in creation all things serve God. Look at the inanimate creation. What have we? One great chemical laboratory where there is perpetual activity, no stagnation. Look at the animate creation. What have we? An enormous factory where the law of labour is rigidly enforced, all working out the life that God has put in. And when we turn to the teaching of St. Paul we see, from the different figures he uses, the kind of life God expects from us. We are soldiers, we are husbandmen, we are athletes, we are pilgrims. He puts before us a life of activity. An American was told by an English tourist that he was surprised to find no 'gentlemen' in his country. 'What are they?' asked the American. The Englishman answered, 'People that do not work for their living.' 'Oh,' said the shrewd New Englander, 'we have some of these here; only we call them tramps!' God wants not tramps but workers for His glory.

(2) *In Righteousness.*—This is for the good of others. If God has blessed us we have to show it in our walk. People are far more helped by the life we live than by the views we hold. You remember what was said by a coloured preacher. He said, 'There are two parts in the gospel; the first part is the believing it; and the second part the behaving it.' We have to be 'behaving' it, and God will give us continual opportunities to show that we are ensamples of the wonderful blessings He has given us. Now, service includes two great things—works and fruit. We may be laid aside from active work, but we are never laid aside from the sphere of fruitfulness, unless we turn away from Christ. How comforting it is to know that, if He has laid us on a sick bed, we may be very fruitful, though there is no active service; and it is the fruit that glorifies God. 'Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.' It is possible in health to be very busy about good works, and not fruitful in them. St. Paul prays in Col. i. 10: 'That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work.' 'The fruit of the Spirit'—there is no other fruit—not the fruit of the Christian, but the fruit of the Holy Ghost. There may be a great deal of zeal and activity in connection with work, but very little fruit. We want the fruit. 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.' Look at that little word 'light.' It is said of our blessed Lord, 'The light was the life'—not the miracles that He wrought, not even the words that He spoke. The word that He lived—that was the light. We have got to shine. It is not the abundance of our good works, it is the light that comes from the life, from illuminated lives. Then people will look at the good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven.

The Prophet of the Highest.

Luke i. 76.—'And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways.'

1. THE word prophet is no longer used in the sense which it commonly bears in the translation of the Bible. There it seldom means a foreteller of the future. It is employed rather of one who so speaks forth another's mind as to interpret his purpose and thoughts. A good deal therefore of the Bible is ill-understood, or wholly misunderstood, if the words 'prophet,' and 'prophecy' are taken in the narrow sense in which alone they are now used, and not in their older, larger meaning.

God did not reveal ordinary historical events to the Jews any more than He now reveals them to Englishmen. Revelation is a thing purely spiritual.

¶ A teacher in a Mission Sunday School in an east-coast town of Scotland put the question to her class 'What is a prophet?' There was dead silence for a moment or two, then one little fellow shyly ventured, 'It's a man that gets to ken what God's thinkin.' Could there be a better definition?

But if in the Bible there is no prediction of common things; if the writers are left to themselves in their presentment of what befalls men and nations in time, there is undoubtedly a revelation by the Spirit of God of momentous facts—the coming of a Saviour and the existence of a Kingdom of God—which man could never discover or record for himself. These are spiritual truths for which time does not count; they are not incidents to be classed as present, past, or future in any historical sequence. They differ altogether from battles, sieges, victories, and defeats. Of the prediction of such things there was no more in Palestine than there may be in Europe now. The mission of the prophets was not to foretell disasters or triumphs, though these they sometimes were competent to foresee, just as these may still be foreseen by sagacious observers of the drift of history. Rather it resembled the mission of the last of the prophets, John the Baptist himself. They went before the face of the Lord to prepare His way, their thoughts ever directed to things above rather than to things before. There can be no prophet of the Highest whose eye is not always turned towards something still unrealized—so far the vulgar conception of his office is true—but it is merely an accident if that something is fulfilled in the future. His function is to interpret God's will. He carries men's thoughts up to God; he does not bring the secrets of the future into the present. He cries: 'This is God's purpose,' but not: 'God reverses the law of man's creation as a creature in time, and by me draws the veil from the future.' He is the mouthpiece of God to men because he seeks inspiration from God, and thereby can give men glimpses of the love of God, the mercy of God, the justice of God, the power of God. These are all things spiritual and eternal and infinite, to which from their very nature the ideas of past, present, and future cannot attach. To understand these, and teach men these, is to be a prophet of the Highest, a very different thing from a prophet of the future, or a recorder of the present or the past in the shifting scene of passing time, the rise or fall of empires, the founding or the overthrow of dynasties, the progress or the decay of civilizations, 'all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them.'

The one kind of prophecy is not worth attempting, but may be left to fortune-tellers and the like impostors; whereas to seek to be a prophet of the Highest is, after all, nothing less than to try to be a child of God and a citizen of His Kingdom. When a man is in love with ideals, and would make them loved by others, he is in that measure a prophet of the Highest, 'the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.' The voice is his who, putting himself in God's hand, and seeking to be His prophet, gives life and strength and faculties to enlarge the Kingdom of Heaven.

2. How is a man to live that God may through his life reveal himself to others?

(1) First, no doubt, he must grasp the idea of God as at once supreme over man, and dependent upon man for the advancement of His purpose among men. This is the burden of the prophets—the thought of infinite spiritual power controlling the universe by unaltered purpose certain to be fulfilled, nevertheless advanced or retarded by man. At any time the bulk of mankind may be unconscious of this purpose or careless for its fulfilment, and so far as they are so, may fail to forward God's decree. But there is also at any time a minority or remnant to whom God's purpose is a reality, perhaps the only reality in life, who see that there can be but one issue to God's purpose, and that for the acceleration of that issue they may make themselves God's instruments. The man who by God's help converts this conception into a daily force and familiar influence is become a prophet of the Highest; as indeed is also he who at times is enabled to direct his life thereby.

(2) As in the lower field of intellect, so in the moral and the spiritual field we may take the same road. We must let God speak to us; if

we would have Him speak through us. He speaks in a thousand ways. If we do not hear, it is because we are not simple enough. We ask, perhaps, how that can be a message from the Source of all knowledge and power which claims nothing save what a child gives best—unreasoning trust, ill-based faith. It does not square with our pride that we should in this be no better than the young and the simple. Or we ask, again, how the Spirit of God can dwell in the hearts of men, when in the heart which we know best His influence seems so feeble and slow. But has not the Word Himself declared that the leaven of the Kingdom of Heaven ferments slowly? The spirit of Christ is there, if the heart cherishes ideals and is eager to fight for them.

Given these two things, the faith of a child and the grown man's resolve to fight on against temptation to betray the holy spirit of the Highest, a man is indeed a prophet. God speaks to others through him. He has the true prophet's ideal of a Kingdom of God. He feels the compulsion to prepare the way of the Lord.

The Dayspring.

Luke i. 78.—'The dayspring from on high hath visited us.'

WRITERS, both sacred and secular, both ancient and modern, have celebrated the day-spring, or dawn. Hardly any poetic fancy could be brighter than the ancient myth which represents the dawn as a lovely maiden rising from the waters of the east. Casting aside with graceful sweep the veil of night, and hastening forward on the foremost ray of light, she opens the gates of day and scatters from her rosy fingers the drops of dew, which sparkle on the breast of morn as the stars upon the brow of night.

The sacred writers use language more grave, if less poetic, in describing its beauty. The writer of the Book of Job pictures the celestial harmony of the dawn of creation's wondrous day by telling us that 'The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.' The same pen compares the far-darting eyes of the huge leviathan of the river to the dawn, saying, 'His eyes are like the eyelids of the morning.' The prophet Hosea, alluding to Israel's deliverer and restorer, says, 'His going forth is prepared as the morning.' And Malachi, the last of the Old Testament prophets, seeing both the dawn and the fuller glory of the day referred to in the text, says, 'Unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.' Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, who utters the grand prophetic hymn with which the first chapter of St. Luke's Gospel closes, employs the same illuminating image as Malachi. He sees Messiah's day, not as far away in the distant future, but as near at hand, as already announcing itself in the rubescence with which its approach was gilding the hilltops, and heralding the dawn of a day of joy to the world.

In what sense is Christ to be regarded as the Dayspring from on high?

1. In the first place He is *the Dayspring of the gospel dispensation*, as distinguished from the Jewish. That ancient system had fulfilled its mission and done its work. It was covered with the hoariness of senility, and sinking under the weight of its own decrepitude. From the beginning God designed it to be transient and to give place to a new and better system. As the sere leaves of the bract or sheath, which enfolds and protects the tender bud in winter, fade and fall off when in spring the bud outgrows them, so did the Mosaic dispensation pass away and give place to the gospel, which it had protected and for which it had prepared. It well fulfilled its mission and accomplished its work, and then passed away. The local and restricted nature of the Mosaic economy forbade its religion ever becoming universal, as the gospel was destined to be. It did not adapt itself to men and times, but the reverse. It was confined to one land and to one race of men. It had only one sanctuary for all the people. It could therefore never become a catholic religion. The gospel which the Dayspring introduces is suited to, and sufficient for, the whole world. It suits the spiritual conditions and wants of men everywhere. It brings blessings to the most civilized. It civilizes and elevates the barbarian and savage. It suits the spiritual condition and wants of the dull Esquimaux of the frigid zone, as well as the impulsive and fervid children of the tropics, or the more sober-minded and thoughtful inhabitants of temperate climes. It bears to

every race which receives it knowledge of God and man, with a call to sobriety and rectitude of life. It teaches all that God loves them, and calls on them to reciprocate that love, and to observe His commandments. It teaches not only higher moral precepts, but higher aims of life. The light of the Dayspring, like the light of the sun, is meant for all; it is suited to the vision of all, it is sufficient to supply the wants of all. It is stayed in its illuminating career by neither geographic nor ethnographic boundaries. So beneficent has its influence been on the masses of the peoples where it has prevailed that, had we no word of prophecy foretelling its universality, we might infer from its nature its conquest of the world. We cannot, then, fail to observe how the scope and influence of the gospel dispensation differs from Judaism, which was limited to a single nation, had but a single sanctuary for all its people, and was composed of one race of men; how unlike it also is to surrounding heathenism, which, even in its best forms, stultified the soul, stifled its highest aspirations and quenched its yearnings for the love of God, the root of all true virtue. The dawn of the gospel dispensation is surely the rising of a day more blessed and glorious than the twilight of either Judaism or heathenism. It is of a promise as much more glorious as is the dawn of the morning than the setting of the stars!

> Look and see, the orient morning
> Breaks along the heathen sky;
> Lo! the expected day is dawning,
> Glorious dayspring from on high!

2. Again, He is *the Dayspring of a new, a theanthropic, life in the world.* No such life had before been revealed to man. Angels had often visited our world, and their visits had been hailed with joy. Honoured members of our own race had, at intervals, appeared as actors on the stage of history, and accomplished good for their fellow-men. The Lord Jehovah had Himself descended in the glory of His majesty on Mount Sinai, and given His people a fiery law. But each was simply angelic, human, or Divine. The new life is that of the God-man, or God in man. Christ was both the Son of God and the Son of the Virgin Mary. He had both a truly sinless human nature and a truly Divine nature. From the day the first man sinned till that on which the second Adam was born no sinless human life had entered our world. The malady of sin had marred the life of every one. Christ comes in human nature, and, as the Just One takes the place of the unjust, that He might bring them to God. But He had no sin, inherent or derived, original or actual. Hence the family of which He becomes the head is a holy family. Not indeed through His moral or spiritual excellence, transmitted by any kind of heredity; but because the merit of His righteousness justifies the sinner, and the power of His holy life and precepts, quickened by His spirit, transforms men into the likeness of God. Thus they become members of the new family.

3. Further, Christ is *the Dayspring of spiritual life in the souls of men.* We lack the power of spiritual discernment while we are in sin and ignorance of God. For sin, like a pillar of cloud, shuts out from us the light of heaven. It so environs us, that we see not through it into the brightness beyond. We neither realize the gloominess of our condition, nor act as if we longed for the true light. In many cases it is manifest that the mind may be cultured, the taste refined, the manners attractive, and the morals unexceptionable, and yet the darkness of spiritual night hang over the soul—perception of Divine things, of the love of God, and the gracious mission of Christ are wholly wanting. As the light of the Dayspring, in its noon-tide brightness, fell on Saul the persecutor as he went towards Damascus, and transformed him into Paul the Apostle, so does the light of the same blessed Dayspring, breaking into the soul, become the dawn of spiritual life to it. His entrance dispels its darkness and floods the soul with light; new desires are awakened, new aspirations and purposes are felt, new beauties discovered in the knowledge and favour of God, and new movements towards Him are endeavoured. It is a moment of beginnings of the better hope. As the colossal statue of Memnon near Thebes in Egypt gave forth musical sounds when struck by the foremost rays of the rising sun, so does the Dayspring from on High send out the rays of His love and mercy into the soul and awaken in it spiritual music.

4. Once more, He is *the Dayspring from the*

night of silence in the grave. He entered the darkness of the tomb, and rose again, giving assurance to all His followers of a day of life and immortality. He was the first fruits of them that slept, and leaves the comforting promise that all who sleep in Jesus shall awake to enjoy with Him the light of an endless day. He is the second Adam, the head of a sinless and deathless family. His resurrection, after three days in the grave, is the proof and pledge of a great ingathering from the harvest field of the world, when all His own shall be garnered in the home above. Not one, small or great, shall be forgotten, whether they sleep in the peaceful burial-ground in which the ashes of their fathers repose, or in crypt or catacomb where their bones may have been stealthily laid, or whether their dust has been carried from the stake and scattered in the winds, or whether they have found their last resting-place in the trackless wastes of the ocean, or have perished in the carnage of the battlefield, or whether they sleep in unwept and unlettered graves or in costly vaults and mausoleums among the honoured of the earth—they shall wake in the light of a glorious resurrection morning, over which the radiance of the Dayspring from on High is shining in noontide brightness. How cheering, then, is it, as we go down to the grave, or lay our loved ones in its silence, to be assured that the Dayspring has gone before and illuminated all the way with the brightness of His rising, having carried the lamp of hope before us, through the gloom of the invisible world, up to the throne of His Father's glory.

God's Miracle of Love! That He should build
A Bridge *to* us and cross by Christmas-Birth!
Yet, all being said and done, it wears away—
This earth He reach'd—our landslip makeshift earth.
Lo! Love's fruition furthermore fulfill'd!
He built a Bridge *from* us on Easter Day.
At Day-Break cross'd He, and for you and me
Safe after-crossings of that Bridge He will'd—
To reach man's mainland and the world to be.[1]

[1] A. S. Cripps, *Lake and War*, 97.

Christmas Day.

Luke i. 78.—'The dayspring from on high hath visited us.'

THE associations of Christmas Day are so winsomely beautiful, so poetically tender, that this has become the sweetest of festivals recognized by the Christian Church, and so long as there is a place in human nature for poets, for the mystic, the spiritual, the tender, so long will Christmas Day hold its place. This is the day when joy and sorrow shake hands, when we feel that sorrow and joy condition each other, that the former explains and declares the latter. This is the day for reunion, when heart clasps heart, the day when we have time and impulse to be kind, the day when we forget and forgive, the day when brotherhood is recognized, the day when we come nearest to breaking down that unbreakable partition which is ever between soul and soul. This is the day when we recognize in the very pathos of things the nearness of God. While humanity is what it is, this festival must hold its place, associated with the name that is above every name.

But why the name of Jesus? There have been other names in history. Cæsar, Charlemagne, Hildebrand—why do we not keep the birthdays of these? Few, if any, of us know when their birthdays are, and we do not care. Yet the first descendant of the Cæsar sat upon the throne in imperial Rome when Jesus was laid in the lowly cattle-shed. It matters little to-day about Cæsar, but it matters so much about Christ that in temples all over the land congregations come together to sing praises to His name. Why not Charlemagne? That great king and emperor was crowned on Christmas Day, 800, in St. Peter's at Rome, and history took a new start from the event. What would it matter to us had he never been crowned at all? We sing to-day:

All hail the power of Jesus' name,
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all.

Born in a stable, cradled in a manger, yet King of kings and Lord of lords—it is the birthday of the Prince of Peace that is precious to us, and not the crowning day of Charlemagne. Why not

Hildebrand? He was one who claimed to be lord of the visible universe, reigning in the name of Christ, master of emperors, king of kings, the vicar of God. On a certain wonderful day we see Hildebrand, Pope and prince, sitting in his castle at Canosa, and outside the gate, standing in the snow, is the Emperor himself, suing for mercy at the feet of the vicar of Christ. Day after day there he stands, day after day there sits Hildebrand, magnificent in his ecclesiastical authority and power, ruling in the name of Jesus. Where has that pretension gone to? We do not want it to-day. We would not have it to-day; no Pope, no Archbishop, no temporal dominion of the Church of Christ can claim authority over the minds and consciences and independence of men to-day. But as the temporal power of the Church has crumbled into nothing, the authority of Jesus has been like a rising sun. Higher than ever He stands to-day in the esteem of humanity, the festival of His birth the sweet Sabbath of the Church.

1. Jesus has *brought to light truths the world does not take sufficient account of,* but which it will never let go, and of these the first is the nearer vision of God. It comes so natural to us to say, 'Abba, Father!' Where did we learn that word for God? The fishermen heard it from the lips of Jesus. But perhaps somebody else said it before? Very likely; but it made all the difference when Jesus said it. When we say 'Father' we think of the Son, and when men have looked into the heart of Christ and learned there, they have said to themselves, 'What must the Father be?' 'Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.' 'Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me?' Through that glorified Sonship we read the Fatherhood Divine. God has come near. The pain of humanity remains, the discipline of life continues still, the shadow has not lifted, but the light is shining upon it.

¶ The idea of Jesus is the illumination and the inspiration of existence. Without it moral life becomes a barren expediency, and social life a hollow shell, and emotional life a meaningless excitement, and intellectual life an idle play or stupid drudgery. Without it the world is a puzzle, and death a horror, and eternity a blank. More and more it shines, the only hope of what without it is all darkness. More and more the wild, sad, frightened cries of men, who believe nothing, and the calm, earnest, patient prayers of men who believe so much that they long for perfect faith, seem to blend into the great appeal which Philip of Bethsaida made to Jesus at the Last Supper. . . . And more and more the only answer to that appeal seems to come from the same blessed lips that answered Philip, the lips of the Mediator Jesus, who replies: 'Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known me? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.' [1]

O Love! O Life! Our faith and sight
Thy presence maketh one;
As through transfigured clouds of white
We trace the noon-day sun.

So, to our mortal eyes subdued,
Flesh-veiled, but not concealed,
We know in thee the fatherhood
And heart of God revealed.

We faintly hear, we dimly see,
In differing phrase we pray;
But, dim or clear, we own in thee
The Light, the Truth, the Way! [2]

2. Jesus has *given us another hope.* Life is bigger, the horizon is wider, we are looking beyond, and 'the best is yet to be.' God has set Himself alongside every human experience. Christ might have come otherwise—on the clouds of heaven, to the sound of the trumpet, with glory, pomp, and power; but He did not. He was born in a stable, and cradled in a manger, and somehow the instinct of humanity affirms that to be the way God should come. In the meek and lowly Jesus, in the humble love of that self-manifestation, we have the last revelation of the heart of God. There is nothing more that we need to know. Jesus brought to us a new humanity. Unconsciously we have been shaping our ideals since we began to think—young people are unconsciously or subconsciously looking to this man and that, to this type of character and the other, as models on which to shape theirs—and we think with justice of the strong men who have

[1] A. V. G. Allen, *Phillips Brooks*, 324.
[2] J. G. Whittier.

stood in the past for the right, the good and the true. Beyond, behind, above, humanity had been looking wistfully, gladly, toward the type which is higher, the Man of men, the norm of what humanity ought to be. When we see a good man and love a good man, we mentally measure him against the stature of Christ. Is he like Him?—then he is good. How near does he come to Him?—that is the measure of his goodness.

¶ To say nothing of eternal salvation, we must, in the conduct of life, shape our behaviour by some one standard, or the result is chaos. We must have some one method or principle which is to settle beforehand how we are to do this or that, and the method or principle should be Christ. Leaving out of sight altogether His Divinity, there is no temper, no manner so effectual, so happy as His for handling all human experience.[1]

God became Man that we
Might learn what a man should be!
How tender and true and strong,
How patient to suffer wrong.
When He for our sakes did die,
And rising, went up on high,
Still God, and still Man, He sent
A Guide to the Way He went,
Who should give to us, day by day,
Grace to live lives His Way.
God became Man that we
Might learn what a man should be! [1]

¶ The sublimest incident in *The Idylls of the King* is the parting of Arthur from his sinful, shamestricken queen. There she lies, grovelling at his feet, beautiful still, quivering with the shame of her degraded womanhood, not daring to look up into his kingly face. Here beside her, bending over, stands Arthur, the prince without fear and without reproach, and he stoops and blesses her, as he parts, with the prophecy that they two shall meet before high God, and claim each other for their own. As he passes from her presence Guinevere raises her head, and sobs out in passionate utterance:

Gone—my lord!
Gone thro' my sin to slay and to be slain!
And he forgave me, and I could not speak.
Farewell? I should have answer'd his farewell.
His mercy choked me. Gone, my lord the King,
My own true lord! how dare I call him mine?
The shadow of another cleaves to me,
And makes me one pollution: he the King,
Call'd me polluted; shall I kill myself?
What help in that? I cannot kill my sin,
If soul be soul; nor can I kill my shame;
No, nor by living can I live it down.

I must not dwell on that defeat of fame.
Let the world be; that is but of the world
What else? what hope? I think there was a hope,
Except he mock'd me when he spake of hope.

And blessed be the King, who hath forgiven
My wickedness to him, and left me hope
That in mine own heart I can live down sin
And be his mate hereafter in the heavens
Before High God.

It was my duty to have loved the highest;
It surely was my profit had I known;
It would have been my pleasure had I seen
We needs must love the highest when we see it,
Not Lancelot, nor another.

Tennyson's gospel is the gospel of pardon; Tennyson's future is the future of hope. Where did he get it? He never created it, he saw it in the Jesus of Galilee.[1]

[1] Mark Rutherford.

[1] *In the House of my Pilgrimage*, 65.

A Teacher's Text.

Luke i. 79.—'To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.'

THIS is a teacher's text. Even from a child's point of view, it is a fair description of the work of a good school. The child cares chiefly for that quality in a teacher—the power of making things 'clear.' He comes to value other kinds of light also: that which comes, for instance, from the wide knowledge or the keen imagination of the teacher or the writer, or from his power of inspiration. But the precious book or speech presents itself to him still in the same way, as new light; as making him see something that he had not seen.

The other reference, to the 'way of peace,' does not suggest itself to him in his school days. At first he is bewildered by all the new experi-

[1] R. J. Campbell, *City Temple Sermons*, 230.

ences, and afterwards it is the amount and vigour of life that impresses him rather than its peacefulness. But looking back, he sees himself guided into greater peace of a very real kind—childish morbidities swept away, room made for the free growth of any powers he had, instincts flourishing in a keener air than that of the home school-room.

1. When a teacher of infants helps a little child to learn the use of its unknown powers and the management of its bewildering impulses—leading it towards self-mastery, co-ordinating into a wider and richer life the forces that pull it hither and thither, releasing it from the bondage and the storms of babyhood, and preparing it to deal victoriously with new difficulties as they come—she is most surely working as a guide towards peace. And this training or guidance is needed not only for the individual but for the nation. How can the great and hard business of the Commonwealth be carried on if its citizens are uneducated and untrained? or how can the national life be rich where minds are narrow and impulses are merely tumultuous or starved? Consider all the intricate headwork which must be done, and the wise and patient public opinion which must come into being, if the nations are to find the way even of outward international peace. If we have part of the task of preparation for this, we could hardly choose higher work to share with God.

Perhaps it would not be too fanciful to distinguish the two sides in the text. One teacher is interested chiefly in the bringing of light; he is not only a teacher but a lifelong student of truth, and his work will expand along the lines of scholarship. Another will care chiefly for the work of guidance, not the scholar's side of teaching but the pastoral side. He will carry it further along the lines of social work, with growing skill in dealing with human beings and growing care for humanity. There is no need to say, and no possibility of saying, that one of these types is better than the other. Each will be specially fitted for certain special posts, and both are imperatively needed by the nation.

2. Are we arrogant when we take that text to ourselves? Are we justifying the popular complaint of the conceit and self-sufficiency of teachers? The accusation should be far from the truth, if we are working rightly; for any truth that it has depends on our being dead. So far as we are alive, in touch ourselves with the Light and with the Way, there will be no danger of our lacking humility.

(1) In the first place, *we shall become humble through our personal touch with the things of which we are the servants.* So long as we go on learning we shall not be conceited about what we have learnt. Only when we cease to learn, and our acquired knowledge turns set and stiff, can we make of it a pedestal to stand on. The typical scholar is not an arrogant person. The epitaph on Lewis Nettleship in Balliol College chapel is a classical description of the light-bringer who himself is turned towards the light: 'He loved great things, and thought little of himself: desiring neither fame nor influence, he won the devotion of men and was a power in their lives: and seeking no disciples, he taught to many the greatness of the world and of man's mind.'

(2) In the second place, when we are real teachers *we learn humility through knowing our pupils.* We find that the Light and the Way are not quite the same for any one of them as for ourselves. We give only such help as we can; they take of it only what they can. Our service is likely to reduce itself to giving them just light enough to find means to other light, or putting them into a path which will lead to another road which is not ours. The most we can usually hope is that some scrap of a suggestion may be a little help in combining with other things to enable the pupil to get a little nearer to finding for himself what he needs. And what is true of religion is true of every other important kind of enlightenment and guiding. The teacher's light, for the pupil, is seldom more than a distant street lamp shining dimly through his window. Along with other sources of light, it may enable him after some time to find the position of one of the electric switches in his room.

Indeed it is on this that we come rightly to lay stress. It is just as well that we cannot give our pupils a candle ready lighted to carry about with them, for their needs go so far beyond the power of a candle. The only thing worth hoping is that we may help them towards light-finding, or light-making, or road-engineering for themselves.

We know this is true in intellectual training; it is no less true in matters of conduct. The working out of truth and righteousness is an intricate and solitary business in our own living experience. Will it not be the same for our children? If we are still seekers ourselves, we shall be in little danger of patronizing those who are beginning the search.

(3) *We shall be humble* towards that which we serve, and toward those whom we teach, and in the third place, *towards all that universe which works together with us*, and in which our work is so small a part. We are fellow-workers with the past generations. We did not invent reading and writing, or discover history and geography, or work out the laws of number and space. We did not even create the means of teaching, the books and the schools; nor, on the whole, did even our profession create them. Who made the orderly nation and the system of government which enables these things to exist? Who worked out the moral laws, and set up the great sign-posts which now we show to the children? We are gatherers-up and transmitters of what we did not make—of what came first from Nature, and then from millions who rest in 'unvisited tombs.' And the universe which honours us thus first made us.

We are fellow-workers with the present—with our pupils' homes and their neighbours and their country—and fellow-workers with the future. We teach our children to read, and others write and will write the books for them. We bring them a little light by which they may find their way to other light not brought by us. So, now that we are teachers, we find that no single piece of work is ours alone; that no line can be drawn anywhere round what *we* have done. If we bring light, it melts into the light that others bring. If we guide, it is usually in one respect only, for a moment only, and then the help is found in other guidance than ours. We have a special gift to bring, but we shall not exaggerate its importance, though it is our business to bring it. The best light 'lighteth every man' even though our work fails.

If we try to isolate our own work, its success seems indeed unstable enough:

When Andrew went a-fishing
  All night in Galilee,
Dawn would bring him a heavy net,
  Or five fish, or three:
It was just as the sea would have it,
  And fisherman's luck, said he.

After, he went a-fishing
  For wilder fish than of yore,
And many straining netfuls
  He drew in to shore.
But at last they hung him cross-wise:
  Fisherman's luck once more.

All ye that go a-fishing
  Know this of the patient art:
Eight nights' harvest may break your nets,
  And the ninth break your heart.

But the thought is not complete without another poem:

Others shall sing the song,
Others shall right the wrong;
Finish what I begin
And all I fail of win.
What matter I or they,
Mine or another's day?

It need not make us less zealous to hope for that, and it should make us less feverish. No man, and above all no teacher, begins or carries on his work by himself, or finishes it himself. It is carried on by all nature and all humanity, before us and after us.

Must we not mean at least this, if we say that we share the work with God?

The Enrolment.

Luke ii. 1.—'Now it came to pass in those days, there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be enrolled.' (RV).

It is a morning very bright:
Through all the stars of the long starry night
Mary hath not been sleeping: for delight
She hath kept watch through the starry night.

Joseph comes to her quietly:
'A journey I must take with thee,
Mary, my wife, from Galilee.'
He saw that she had wept,
  And all her secret kept.[1]

St. Luke's second chapter continues his first with-

[1] Michael Field, *Mystic Trees*, 58.

out any change in the high spiritual level, exquisite moral quality, and fine adaptation of literary style to the matter it conveys. The story of salvation begins with the birth of a little child; and there is a great beauty and power in such a prologue to the story of the Son of God. There are none who have understanding at all but may understand this. Yet, though so humble, the Nativity is shown on a background that is highly significant.

At this point, the author who wrote the polished preface to his Gospel reveals himself, and shows the readers for whom he writes, by that background on which he sets the Birth of Jesus. He portrays a series of pictures which show the central scene of the Holy Nativity on a varied horizon farther and nearer. In the farther distance we see Imperial Rome, and Cæsar Augustus issuing the decree for an enrolment of his subjects. In the nearer distance is the province of Syria, under Quirinius as Governor; and we see Palestine stirred with the commotion which arranges the Jews into their tribes and families and gathers these into their ancestral homes. The foreground is the humble cell or shed in which the Saviour found His first earthly rest at Bethlehem, the City of David. The town is thronged with an unwonted crowd; the street is busy, and every room is full. The picture is completed when, alongside of the city, there is sketched the hillside pastures where shepherds watch their flocks by night, till suddenly the light of the moon and stars in the clear Syrian sky is dimmed by the brightness of a heavenly vision which points to them the wonders of the Saviour's birth. And, finally, the whole picture is irradiated with an angelic host, and we are thrilled with the song of praise to God and peace to men.

This is art; but it is art conceived in fullness of knowledge and executed with the perfect simplicity of truth. The whole world, as it were, stands still in the hour of the birth of Jesus, so that our eye can review its scenes in an instant of pause. The sceptre of Cæsar Augustus sways the movement of the world's great affairs, and orders the tread of humble footsteps on the road from Nazareth to Bethlehem, and fills an ancient, quiet city with this unaccustomed stir. But the swing of the Imperial sceptre, and the movement of many feet on distant roads, are one with the measure of a song that is heaven-born, breathed in men's wondering ears by the Spirit of God.

1. Here, then, we have a decree recorded from the second Cæsar affecting all the Roman world, a decree from one centre, from one man, affecting the whole of the then civilized world, a great Imperial design worthy of the great ruler of the most important empire that the world has yet known. And yet such is the poverty of the history of the time of Augustus, as compared with the period which preceded and the period which followed, that there is no reference in history to the decree other than this in the pages of Luke's Gospel. And there it is set down merely to account for the fact that two persons, wholly insignificant in the politics of the world, came up from one little place to another, so that a child was born in Bethlehem, David's city.

The Bible is full of the sort of solemn irony which that thought enshrines. How large a part of the interest that men take in the giant forms of empire of the old world in Egypt, in Assyria, in Babylonia, in the empire of Alexandria, even in Rome—how large a part of the interest of these great empires comes to us now from the part they played in the gradual unfolding of the redemptive purpose of God. And these empires played that part all unintentionally, all unconsciously. It could not but be so. They had not access to the knowledge of the methods and the purposes of God; they were not consciously included in the scope of His plan. But we too, have an empire; we too have an empire which is to play a part as important as any in the destinies of the world. And we are not unconcsious of, we are meant to be continually alive to, the fact that our imperial policy is bound up at all points and everywhere with the development of something vaster and greater than England, with the development of God's great purpose for the redemption of the world.

¶ The Roman laid his roads and drew them straight over hill and plain; his purpose was that his legions might sweep over them and demolish any foe that might dispute his sway; but the purpose of God was that over these roads the messengers of the Cross might run with the great tidings of salvation. And in the fullness of time along the Roman roads there swept to the utmost

corners of that ancient world the vivifying message, and hearts risen from the dead took up the ancient refrain, 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings.' And the purpose of God abideth ever the same. When the steamship made its first voyage, when the first engine ran on the rails, when the first message was flashed beneath the waves—men thought only of commerce, of imperial power, of the enrichment of life. But these things God purposed as the means through which the gospel of His Son should hasten to the ends of the earth. And to-day they bring the formerly closed lands to our doors. Along these the message of God runs thrilling to the utmost ends of the earth. As it was with the Roman roads, so is it to-day with the inventions of men. They are potent instruments for the evangelization of the world, polished shafts in the Christian armoury. What was impossible for the generations before us, they make not only possible but easy. In the universe which God made, the seeing eye can still discern the hand of God shaping and moulding and directing its forces to the end that what is highest may put forth its power and rule. It is when the material becomes the instrument of the ideal that it fulfils the thought and purpose of God. The missionary enterprise is the ideal in the hearts of men, the element which is all unselfishness, marred by no self-interest, and the forces of the world are directed by God to this end—the triumph of the Ideal.[1]

2. But the very fact that St. Luke alone records the enrolment has been the cause of suspicion. Nay, it has been said: 'Here you have no fact at all, but a clumsy invention, a careless antedating of what in fact happened some twelve years later. And this is so significant that it must throw its light on the whole of this record of the circumstances of the birth of Jesus Christ; it is in fact nothing better than a legend, such a legend as habitually grows up to decorate the birth stories of the favourite heroes of mankind.' So it has been said, by critic after critic of our gospel story, not only by those of a smaller race, but by the great men, the giants of historical investigation.

[1] Norman Maclean, *Can the World be Won for Christ?* 172.

The chief points are these: It has been asserted by a large number of critics (1) that Quirinius never governed Syria until A.D. 5-6, nine years after the death of Herod, and (2) that the census which he then made in Palestine was transferred by St. Luke's simple blundering to the reign of Herod, who died in 4 B.C. Then when this transference had been made in defiance of all historical truth, the circumstances and manner of a Roman census were manipulated and misrepresented so as to make it appear that Joseph of Nazareth came to Bethlehem to be counted (which there was no need for him to do), and that Mary also came to be counted (although, even if her husband had for some reason been required to appear at Bethlehem, there was no possible cause why her presence should also be called for). The theory of the critics was that these fictions were concocted by St. Luke in order to explain why and how the son of persons who lived at Nazareth came to be born in Bethlehem. Then, to give dignity to this whole series of inventions, St. Luke, according to the critics' theory, added that the census was universal for the Roman world, and that the decree ordering a universal census was issued by the Emperor (who was the only authority able to issue such a universal regulation, and who therefore was introduced for the purpose).

But the historical accuracy of St. Luke's statement has now been vindicated, and the vindication has come from a wholly unexpected quarter. The rubbish heaps of Egypt have rendered up all sorts of written papers. Oxyrhynchus has furnished great masses of these papyri. They are mostly of a domestic character, and indicate how very similar human nature and human life are at all periods. There is a letter, for instance, from a boy to his father; it might have been written to-day by any lad to his father, so natural it is, so affectionate, so ill-spelt. But also among these miscellaneous fragments there are a number of census papers. These census papers have made it something more than probable that, after all, a census of a fourteen years' cycle was in fact instituted by Augustus, and synchronism of date extends the probability from Egypt to Syria. There are details, but not important details, of obscurity still remaining. But St. Luke is unmistakably vindicated. The statement is not, as has been repeatedly asserted, impossible, nor is it im-

probable; but in the light of what we now know, it has upon it, as an historical statement, the highest degree of probability. 'There went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world' —that Roman world—'should be enrolled.'

¶ Let me mention in a word or two what we may get from the more definitely official forms and papers. I want to speak especially of one point. A large number of the papyri are census papers. You will remember how there has been for many years past serious difficulty about a noteworthy verse in the Gospel of Luke, in the second chapter. That chapter begins, as you know, with the statement that in those days there went forth a decree from Cæsar Augustus that all the inhabitants of the world—that is, of the Roman Empire—should be enrolled in a census. This was the first enrolment made when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Fifty years ago historians who read those words were forced to say that they contained almost as many mistakes as it was possible to get into two lines. Even those who were most unwilling to admit that Luke had made such mistakes found themselves obliged to have recourse to conjectures which, I am afraid, sounded much like special pleading. But the explanation some of us kept hoping for has come, and come mainly through the papyri. First came the proof, from the masses of census papers found among our new sources, that every fourteen years there was a general enrolment. For, fortunately, the papers are dated. This is their normal style: In the year so and so of the Emperor so and so—then would follow the whole string of his titles—I., A.B., son of C.D., aged *x* years, with a straight nose, black hair, scar on right shin, enroll myself, together with E.F., my wife, aged *y* years, and so on, with name and description of each person. The census paper would proceed further with a statement of effects. They had twenty sheep, two camels, and their house faced a particular street on the south, and adjoined somebody's garden on the west, and so forth. It is reasonable to assume that as Egypt was under the Imperial Roman Government at that time, there was a similar fourteen years' census taken in other parts of the world. Now we know that there was a census taken in the year A.D. 6. We actually possess a census paper from the census of A.D. 34, and probably one from A.D. 20. The only thing we have got to conjecture — and it becomes highly reasonable to conjecture now—is that not only was there one in the year A.D. 6, but that there was also one in the year 8 B.C., which on other grounds has become a more and more probable date for the birth of Jesus.

Now for Luke's second 'blunder,' for there were three chief blunders attributed to him. It was regarded as certain that if there was a census, people did not have to go up to any ancestral town for it. Well, but we have now got two or three pages from a Roman official's letter-book, dated A.D. 104, and in it we read a rescript from the prefect of Egypt ordering that all people are to go back to the county in which they live within the next six weeks in order to be ready for the census. Exit blunder number two!

What about blunder number three? Quirinius was governor of Syria in the year A.D. 6. We know that, and he carried out the census in that year. Therefore it is a blunder when Luke tells us that he was looking after a census somewhere about 8 B.C. Moreover we actually know the name of the man who was governor of Syria in that year, and it is not Quirinius. But about a couple of years ago Sir William Ramsay dug up a stone which shows that Quirinius was in Syria at that time after all. He had been sent there specially, as an extraordinary commissioner, to look after the census, which was a new thing and likely to be unpopular. I suppose it was because he did such good work that he was sent to the job again when the next fourteen years were over. So you see how with the aid of these rubbish-heaps of Egypt and the stones of Asia Minor we can show what an excellent historian Luke was after all.[1]

¶ St. Luke has been proved in the process of discovery to be correct in almost every detail of his statement. Nowhere in the whole range of historical study has there ever been such a complete revolution of opinion and of established knowledge as in respect of this statement, which brings into its sweep so much of the general principles of bureaucratic government and so many details of administration. The story is now established, and the plea now is that Luke's story is a legend because it is true to facts.[2]

[1] J. H. Moulton, *From Egyptian Rubbish-heaps*, 21.

[2] W. M. Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, 226.

3. One point should be noted: 'the world' is not the whole earth, but the Roman Empire.

It happens not infrequently that no simple rendering can represent the distinctions between synonyms conveyed by the original. In such cases, where there seemed to be a likelihood of misunderstanding, a marginal note in the Revised Version directs the attention of the reader to the shade of meaning of which he must take account. For example, our English word 'world' has to do duty for three Greek words quite distinct in meaning. Most commonly 'world' stands for a word which has been naturalized in modern English as 'cosmos.' This presents the thought of the whole sum of finite being as apart from God, and specially it describes all that falls under our observation which is actually estranged from God. Again, 'world' answers to a plural or singular, 'the ages' or 'the age,' in which creation is regarded as a vast system unfolded from æon to æon, as an immeasurable and orderly development of being under the condition of time, of which each 'age' or 'this age' and 'the age to come' has its distinguishing characteristics, and so far is 'the world.' And thirdly, 'the world' renders a term which describes the seat of settled government and civilized life, practically conterminous with the Roman Empire. That is the meaning here.

CHRISTMAS.

Here's a Wonder never knowne,
A King a Manger makes his Throne.
And for Debts which Men should Pay,
Downe his Life at Stake did lay.[1]

CHRISTMAS is the most human and lovable of the Church's festivals. Unlike Easter, which celebrates the glory of the risen Christ, or Whitsuntide, which commemorates the mysterious coming of the heavenly Paraclete, Christmas has something about it very homely and very dear. The Baby and the manger, the shepherds and the star make their appeal not only to the religious fervour of the mystic but also to the natural affections of the human heart. So that nobody feels it incongruous to speak of 'a merry Christmas.' '*Christmas*—how many images the word calls up: we think of carol-singers and holly-decked churches where people hymn in time-honoured strains the Birth of the Divine Child; of frost and snow, and, in contrast, of warm hearths and homes bright with light and colour, very fortresses against the cold; of feasting and revelry, of greetings and gifts exchanged; and lastly of vaguely superstitious customs, relics of long ago, performed perhaps out of respect for use and wont, or merely in jest, or with a deliberate attempt to throw ourselves back into the past, or to re-enter for a moment the mental childhood of the race.'[2] It is indeed a curious medley, part Christian and part pagan, which finds its explanation in the fact that Christmas is a festival of mixed origin and of long and varied history.

[1] From an old Woodcut.

[2] C. A. Miles, *Christmas in Ritual and Tradition*, 18.

I.

The Origin of Christmas.

THE Gospels supply no data which would enable us to fix with certainty the birthday of our Lord. It has been pointed out by Lupi, a learned eighteenth century Jesuit, that 'there is not a single month of the year to which the Nativity has not been assigned by some writer or other.' The reasons which led to the ultimate fixing of the 25th of December are obscure, and the arguments in support of that date are exceedingly far-fetched and fanciful. The main facts, so far as known, may be very briefly summarised. The question appears as the subject of public discussion towards the close of the fourth century. Previous to that time the Eastern Church would seem to have celebrated Christ's baptism on the 6th of January, and to have regarded that date as His birthday, either on the ground that the baptism took place on the anniversary of the physical birth, or, more probably, because the baptism was regarded as the real spiritual birthday of the Christ. In the latter half of the fourth century we find the new date spreading eastward from Rome. Chrysostom, preaching in Antioch in 386 A.D., refers to it as the birthday of Christ *after the flesh*, and says, 'It is not yet ten years

since this day became manifest and known to us. This day is everywhere a matter for discussion, for some accuse it of being a new feast and new-fangled, and of having been introduced but now, while others contend that it is old and original, because the prophets long ago foretold about His birth, and they argue that it was revealed and held in repute by the inhabitants of regions from Gades and Thrace.'

In default of Scripture evidence the argument which appeared most impressive to that age was based upon an old computation according to which the creation of the world took place at the spring equinox, and the beginning of the new creation in Christ, being parallel, must have occurred at the same season. This gave the 25th of March as the birthday, and some ancient authorities held that date. But it was now argued that the new creation began with the Conception by the Virgin, which would bring the birth to the 25th of December. This and similar arguments were obviously advanced in support of a date already chosen, and they throw no light on the real causes that led to the choice of that date, a date which must have been felt to be in harmony with Christian feeling. One influence undoubtedly at work was the fact that at mid-winter, from time immemorial, there had been celebrated the festival of the *Unconquered Sun*. 'What more natural than that the Church should choose this day to celebrate the rising of her Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings, that she should strive thus to draw away to His worship some adorers of the god whose symbol and representative was the earthly sun.'[1] Undeniably there is a beautiful fitness in this. For just as with the turn of the year and the rebirth of the sun there comes, though hidden as yet, the promise and potency of new life to the earth, even so the Babe in the manger, incredible as it may seem, is the bringer of eternal life to men. And most welcome at the darkest of the winter-time is this assurance to every Christian heart.

II.

The Observance of Christmas.

The *Saturnalia* was perhaps the most powerful factor in determining the manner of the observance of Christmas on its social side. This was an ancient Roman festival celebrated from 16th to 24th December. 'The time was one of general joy and mirth. . . . During the festival schools were closed . . . no punishment was inflicted. In place of the toga an undress garment was worn. Distinctions of rank were laid aside, slaves sat at table with their masters, or were actually waited on by them, and the utmost freedom of speech was allowed them. Gambling with dice, at other times illegal, was now permitted and practised. All classes exchanged gifts, the commonest being wax tapers and clay dolls. These dolls were especially given to children.'[1] 'Christmas inherited the general merriment in a more restrained form (excessive only in eating and drinking): games, giving of gifts (especially to children), abundance of sweetmeats and, as more ceremonious elements, burning of candles and bathing before the festival.'[2]

The desire to provide a Christian substitute for the *Saturnalia* had doubtless something to do with fixing the date of Christmas. Two different attitudes are manifest in the Church in regard to pagan festivities and social customs. The ascetic spirit condemned and renounced them. Tertullian may be taken as the most notable representative of this attitude. Leave the *Saturnalia* to the pagans, is his counsel. 'Let them kindle lamps, they who have no light; let them fix on the door-posts laurels which shall afterwards be burnt, they for whom fire is close at hand; meet for them are testimonies of darkness and auguries of punishment. But thou art a light of the world and a tree that is ever green; if thou hast renounced temples, make not a temple of thy own house-door.'[3]

A more humane and kindly spirit sought to control and christianize these festivities. Thus Pope Gregory the Great, writing to Augustine of Canterbury, instructs him how to wean the English from their heathenish ways. 'Because they are wont to slay many oxen in sacrifices to demons, some solemnity should be put in the place of this. . . . Nor let them now sacrifice animals to the devil, but to the praise of God kill animals for their own eating, and render thanks to the

[1] *Christmas in Ritual and Tradition*, 23.

[1] *Encyclopædia Britannica*, xxi. 321.
[2] *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, iii. 609.
[3] *Christmas in Ritual and Tradition*, 269.

Giver of all for their abundance, so that while some outward joys are retained for them, they may more readily respond to inward joys. For from obdurate minds it is undoubtedly impossible to cut off everything at once, because he who strives to ascend to the highest place rises by degrees or steps, and not by leaps.' [1]

A parallel to this policy may be found in modern missionary history. Chinese ancestor worship was at first condemned as idolatrous, but Christian missionaries have now assumed a more favourable attitude towards the custom and regard it as capable of being made the finest bond and bulwark of family life.

There is much in Christmas festivities which, though of pagan origin, is in fullest harmony with the Christian spirit. The merriment and good cheer, the blazing hearth and the lighted candle, the joyous bells and the singing of carols are the expression of a spirit which 'while not forgetting the Divine side of the Nativity, yet delights in its simple humanity, the spirit that links the Incarnation to the common life of the people, that brings human tenderness into religion.' Not less Christian is the Christmas gift, though that also is of pagan origin. It gains an infinitely deeper significance when linked in our minds with God's great gift, visible, tangible, most precious. Mrs. Eddy declared that she never gave presents in a gross, sensuous, terrestrial sense, but sat still and thought about Truth and Purity till her friends were much better for it. This looks suspiciously like meanness and is certainly unchristian. As G. K. Chesterton says, 'The idea of embodying goodwill—that is, of putting it into a body—is the huge and primal idea of the Incarnation. A gift of God that can be seen and touched is the whole point of the epigram of the creed. Christ Himself is a Christmas present. The note of material Christmas presents is struck even before He is born, in the first movements of the sages and the star. The Three Kings came to Bethlehem bringing gold and frankincense and myrrh.' [2] These gifts were offered to the Babe of Bethlehem, and so it is most fitting that in the giving and receiving of Christmas gifts the children should specially be remembered. Thus it has come about that the spirit of Christmas has drawn into its orbit the festival of the good St. Nicholas, the patron saint of children. Under the name of Santa Claus, that worthy bishop of Myra in Asia Minor, whose day is the 6th of December, has now become, for the children at least, the presiding genius of Christmas-time.

It must be admitted, however, that the merriment of Christmas has never been thoroughly purged of its paganism, and continually tends to sink down to a gross and sensual level. Protests against this unseemliness are of frequent occurrence. Thus Philip Stubbes, writing in 1583, says, 'Especially at Christmas tyme there is nothing else used but cardes, dice, tables, maskyng, mumming, bowling, and suche like fooleries; and the reason is, that they think they have a commission and prerogative that tyme to doe as they list, and to followe what vanitie they will. . . . Who knoweth not that more mischeef is that tyme committed than in all the yere besides?' [1] The Puritan Parliament of 1644 appointed Christmas a day of humiliation, 'because it may call to remembrance our sins and the sins of our forefathers, who have turned this Feast, pretending the memory of Christ, into an extreme forgetfulness of him, by giving liberty to carnal and sensual delights; being contrary to the life which Christ himself led here upon earth, and to the spiritual life of Christ in our souls; for the sanctifying and saving whereof Christ was pleased both to take a human life, and to lay it down again.' [2] A modern echo of this protest may be found in the life of Mrs. Booth of the Salvation Army: 'Strange and paradoxical as the fact may appear, it is ungainsayable that in Christian countries Christmas week is probably the worst time in the whole year for winning souls. . . . The season is almost entirely dedicated to fooleries, feastings, and merry-makings. . . . We read with sorrowful amazement that our Lord was laid in a manger because there was "no room for them in the inn." But is He not treated with even greater disrespect in these days, and that by His professed followers'? [3] One need not be an ascetic or a Puritan to feel often a jarring dissonance between the wild and foolish revellings of Christmas-time

[1] Bede, *Hist. Eccl*, i. 30.

[2] *Contemporary Review*, Jan. 1910, p. 68.

[1] *Anatomie of Abuses*, 205.

[2] *Christmas in Ritual and Tradition*, 185.

[3] *Life of Mrs. Booth*, i. 159.

and the spirit of Him whose birth the feast commemorates.

III.

The Spirit of Christmas.

It appears likely that Christmas will maintain its place permanently in the Christian Year. The task, therefore, lies upon the Church of christianizing the festival, by purging it of pagan and sensual elements, and by striving, as far as may be, to recapture in all its beauty and eternal freshness the spirit of the Divine Child. In this new age we need, among other things, a new and more Christian Christmas. A modern writer, looking back across the bitter but revealing years of war, says, 'The old Christmases were very jolly ones, but, after all, were they not very selfish, very self-indulgent, very materialistic? Did we not eat too much, drink too much, spend too much? Did we not give too little, pray too little? reproduce His Christmas too little? "Then, how can we reform our festival?" you ask; "and what sort of Christmas does the world need?" It needs, not a Bacchanalian nor a Bond Street Christmas, but a Christian one, a Christ's Christmas. And the predominating fact of His was that He was there, and there as a Child. If you and I will take that central fact into our remembrance we shall not go far wrong.'[1]

We shall not go far wrong if we try to be young again with the happy innocence of childhood.

For they who to their childhood cling,
And keep their natures fresh as morn,
Once more shall hear the angels sing,
To-day the Prince of Peace is born.[2]

We grow stiff with self importance, we grow hardened with toil and cares, we grow selfish in our sorrows, till the innocent mirth of the children seems a folly or an affront. Christmas comes round to invite us to join again the merry, mystic ring of childhood, for that way our salvation lies.

We shall not go wrong if we earnestly seek the child heart, without which no man shall see the Kingdom of God. It is a heart not proud or self-assertive but gentle and humble, a heart full of peace and goodwill, not hating, not revengeful, but ready to be reconciled, a heart that loves and gives even to the uttermost, a heart like His, who 'though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor.'

This day to man, came pledge of perfect peace,
This day to man, came love and unity;
This day man's grief began for to surcease,
This day did man receive a remedy,
For each offence and every deadly sin,
With guilty heart that erst he wandered in.

In Christes flock, let love be surely placed,
From Christes flock, let concord hate expel;
Of Christes flock let love be so embraced,
As we in Christ, and Christ in us may dwell.
Christ is the author of all unity,
From whence proceedeth all felicity.[1]

J. H. Morrison.

[1] K. Greenland, *The Victorious Child*, 69.

[2] James Russell Lowell.

The Lessons of the Manger.

Luke ii. 7.—'She brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger.'

Is there among all the idylls in the world a fairer scene than this? Behind it lies the mystery contained in the event, stupendous in its nature, incalculable in its consequences, the turning point of the world's history. But here the event itself is all. Could any common birth be told more simply? 'She brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger.' Nothing is known on earth. Yet it is not all silence. At that same hour and near at hand the joy of heaven is heard for a moment, yet in that manner of selection and restriction which marks the communications of God. The incident was quickly past, but it was enough for its purpose, and that purpose included all the ages. What a possession to the world is this dear familiar story. How it comes to us at Christmas with ever-fresh effect, one by which the heart is made better, as all sorts of people feel. The event is our own affair. 'Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given'; and we are present in spirit at the announcement. Let us see what lessons we may learn from it.

[1] Francis Kindlemarsh.

1. The first lesson is *Humility*. The human mind cannot conceive any surrender of place and claims, any willing lowliness and self-forgetfulness, any acceptance of the profoundest abasement, comparable to that which is before us in the birth, and the circumstances of the birth, of Jesus Christ. The measure of it is the measure of the distance between the Creator and the creature, and the creature in the most unregarded, most uncared-for condition, helpless, unknown, of no account for the moment amid the millions of men whom He had made. There He was for the time, the youngest, the weakest, the poorest of them all; and He came thus, to show what God thinks of human pride, of human ambition, of human loftiness. He came thus, to show what God thinks of those who cannot be happy without having the first place and the chief room, and who are miserable when others are put before them. He came thus to show what God thinks of those who have high thoughts about themselves, and who claim that their own high thoughts should be reflected in what others think of them, and in the way in which others treat them. He came thus, to show us what God thinks of those jealousies, and envyings, and heart-burnings about all sorts of things, great and small, in public and private, which are so familiar to the experience of us all. He came thus to show us what God thinks of those who are uneasy when men do not praise them, and who think life a failure unless it exalts them, and brings with it its own proportion of honour and flattery. He came thus, to show how God despises the untruth of self-esteem, the untruth of flattery, and to teach how little the outward shows of our present condition answer to that which, in reality, it is worth while for a living and immortal soul to be. Thought cannot imagine, language cannot tell, the greatness and glory and riches and dominion and power which are His who, to deliver man, did not abhor the Virgin's womb—to what immensities His eye reached, what infinite multitudes in heaven and earth His hand fed, while yet He was here 'wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.' Who of us before such a sight can dare to be proud? Who of us can venture on the falsehood of self-conceit? Who of us but must feel that the truest dignity of our human nature must be found in 'all lowliness and meekness,' in the sincerity of a true and sober measure of ourselves, in a genuine and unaffected humbleness of mind and heart and daily behaviour?

A silent Teacher, Lord,
Thou bid'st us not refuse
To bear what flesh would have us shun,
To shun what flesh would choose.

Our sinful pride to cure
With that pure love of Thine,
O be Thou born within our hearts,
Most Holy Child Divine.

2. The next lesson is *Purity*. We all know amid what innocence, with what purity and holiness, our Saviour came among us. It was the mind and atmosphere of heaven coming with all the height of their sanctities into human flesh. Is not this a spectacle to make us stop and be thoughtful, and consider our own experience of life and society? Whatever our experience is, at least the experience of ages has taught mankind that there is no harder lesson for most of them than the lesson of real purity. The hardness has varied in degree and circumstance; and something less than the real, genuine virtue may have been more or less frequently in fashion. Purity has antagonists too mighty to struggle with to be ever a widely cultivated or an easy virtue. Our own day, our own state of society—whether worse or better than other times we probably cannot judge—has its own special and characteristic dangers. There is much that ought to be otherwise in what passes current and is allowed in literature, in art, in dress; much that is questionable or more than questionable in point of modesty, and what befits a Christian—much of it, no doubt, thoughtless, much of it unintentional, but much, also, deliberate, inexcusable. Let us pass from things which fashion and custom do not mind, but which lower the tone and health of soul and character, which often tempt and corrupt it; let us turn away our eyes from what, however captivating and charming, it is dangerous to know and look at; let us gaze instead at the little Child and His mother. Let us learn there the lesson of strength, of manliness, —for purity means manliness—of abhorrence of evil; let us learn, in the vividness of His Presence, the lesson of that great Beatitude: 'Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.'

Nothing has ever done so much for purity as

the poem of the Madonna and the Child. It must ever be right for morality to condemn the foul licence of the flesh, and to pursue the unrepentant sinner with its penalties, but the policy of repression has never succeeded like the policy of replacement. Neither conscience nor commandments have made impurity so flagitious and loathsome, or lent to purity sanctions so august and lovely, as the Idyll of Bethlehem. In the most lawless ages, and in the foulest minds within the range of Christian thought, the Virgin has cast her shield over the defenceless and created a new reverence for womanhood. To sin against a woman is to insult the mother of Jesus, and to protect a woman is to serve her who was counted worthy of the angel's message. If one be haunted by unholy thoughts and beset by fiery temptations, he had better make his way to the place where a pure mother bends over the Divine Child and the sacred mysteries of womanhood and motherhood are glorified.

The Cradle and the Cross.

Luke ii. 7.—'She brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger.'

Luke xxiii. 33.—'There they crucified him.'

It is easier for us to understand the love of the Cross than to comprehend the love of the Cradle. We do not know what it cost Christ to be a child, to grow up in Nazareth, to endure the common lot, to witness with His sinless eyes the sins of those around Him. We do apprehend in part the hours when He sacrificed Himself for us on Calvary, when He looked from the Cross and there was none to help, and He wondered that there was none to uphold; when our iniquities went over His head and were a burden too heavy for Him to bear. We know in part how the pain increased and the rapture grew, how the Cross was the throne which He ascended that He might draw the whole world to Himself, and how He sent forth from the Tree the rays of light that were to scatter the darkness that covered the earth, the gross darkness that covered the people. But we do not truly grasp the significance of that day unless we take the whole life as part of it, nor the fullness of the love of the Cross unless we take with it the love of the Cradle, the love of Nazareth, the love of the baptism, the love of the ministry, and realize that for us He trod that weary way—each step from first to last.

It is well for us, as the Christmas season comes round, to bend our thoughts to the love of the Cradle, if it were only for the reason that we are called to follow Christ rather in His progress towards the Cross than in His endurance thereon. The love of the Cradle rather than the love of the Cross finds its reflection in Christian lives just now, and is the chief means by which His earthly kingdom stands and is spread. Once it was otherwise, and it may be otherwise again. There was the glorious age of the martyrs, and the blood of the martyrs may again be the seed of the Church. Indeed, it is but yesterday since men and women died for Him in a strong agony like His own. But for most of us now the lesson is spoken from the Cradle.

What did Christ do for us in His first advent?

1. First of all He came to dwell among us. He did not merely visit His people. At Nazareth He took up His abode among them. It is coming home to the heart of His Church that in this our Lord must be followed. It is good to visit the outcast and the poor, but they will never be brought back by visits. It is only as Christian men and women who might live in the peace and comfort of congenial surroundings deliberately make up their minds to forsake these and share the lot of those whom they go forth to seek by day and by night, month after month, and year after year, that the world may be won.

¶ Really to love another person is difficult even for the best of the human race; but how difficult, how almost impossible, when that other person is infamous, degraded, and repulsive. Nevertheless, to read the gospel in church, to pray for love, and to preach about love, making not one single effort of love in our dealings with the abandoned or the lost, is not this manifestly to live our lives entirely outside the Kingdom of Heaven? Christianity is, surely, this intense, unselfish, and ministering love or it is no whit different from the ancient religions of terror and superstition. 'Many shall say to me in that day!' And the judgment is, 'I never knew you!' Nor is this judgment pronounced against the abandoned and

the lost, but against those who professed the name of the Judge, and implicitly believed that they were doers of His will. 'I never knew you'—that is to say, You did kind things without kindness; you wore indeed the garments of love, but there was no love in your hearts; that is to say, *You never once saw the meaning of My life.*

It is when we reflect upon this absence of love from the world, carefully considering in our minds the difference which exists between social kindness and self-sacrificing love, that we are able to see at least something of the greatness of the life of William Booth. His supreme contribution to the religious experience of mankind lies in his proof that by the power of love the worst of men can be changed into the best of men; but his highest and most enduring greatness is the genuine passion of love which urged him into the hells of human existence to work those miracles of conversion. He groaned over the degradation of men, he agonized over the debasement of women, he wept over the sufferings of children. Never has any man whose whole nature so recoiled from the sight of pain, and whose sensitive spirit so shrank from even a recital of grief, waded so far into the sea of agony. He suffered in helping the suffering. He was tortured in rescuing the tortured. And for everyone he helped and rescued at the cost of suffering and torture which only God can compute, he knew that ten thousand others were perishing without comfort and without hope. The travail of his soul was not the travail of a hermit seeking in the solitude of a wilderness to comprehend the glory and the greatness of God, but the travail of a man living in the midst of human want and human sorrow, and with all the love in his heart being able to succour only one here—another there. And he suffered because of men's indifference and men's incredulity. He had proofs to show in every country of the world that love can transform the evil life and restore the shattered life; an enormous host followed him wherever he moved, shouting the hallelujah of triumph; but the world, for the most part, shrugged its shoulders, and left the suffering to suffer and the perishing to die. And in spite of the malignity which assailed him, the envy which traduced him, and the hatred which never ceased to compass his destruction, this love for the poorest, the lowliest, and lost persisted to the end of his life. His greatness is this, that among the many who speak of love he lived a life of love.[1]

¶ We mistake as to wherein true greatness lies. We fancy it to consist in golden treasure, in soft raiment, in the likeness of a kingly crown, whilst our Lord shows that substantial glory is found in sympathy, service, sacrifice.

Whilst the disciples are coveting crowns, and disputing as to which amongst them should be the greater, our Lord has an ear for the cry of misery. The multitude had no sympathy, and the disciples little, but the majesty of God demonstrated itself in bringing salvation to the humble.

The stars of Christ's renown were the eyes He opened, the castaway mantle of the blind was His royal attire, His bodyguard was composed of those whom He had saved, His crown of glory was the diamonds rescued from the dustbin of the despised and forgotten. I cannot open eyes, but I can wipe away tears.[2]

2. Again, Christ teaches us that to be great in His service we must take the road of humility, and of a peculiar humility. We have to empty ourselves in measure, not merely of our sins, but of things which, were the state of the world different, might lawfully be our pride. How far and in what ways this humiliation is to be carried out must be settled by the Christian for himself, but it is certain that it is by liberal things that the acts of the martyrs and the oblations of the whole Israel of God are made up. That is, we must not only do our duty but we must go beyond what seems to be duty. We must denude ourselves of one robe after another till the sacrifice is complete.

3. Once more, we must follow Him in consenting to be despised. All His experience in this life, from the Manger to the Tree, was an experience of scorn. We can put our fingers on one incident after another, and say, 'That was scorn.' The fashion of His Cross, the purple He wore, the sceptre in His hand—all these were meant in scorn. But the closer we read the history, the more we shall see that He bore reproach all the way, and still His faithful servants, in proportion

[1] H. Begbie, *Life of William Booth*, ii. 484.
[2] W. L. Watkinson, *The Gates of Dawn*, 247.

to their fidelity, will encounter the cold disdain of the world. What are we to say of this? Surely the birthday of our Lord should be a resurrection from sloth, from selfishness, from carelessness, and from fear. The hardest of all hard things, says one, is the obedience we need not pay, and says another, the hardest of all suffering is that which wounds our personal pride. But a true humility delivers from this pain, and with a peculiar humility, if the record of the saints witnesses anything, there goes a peculiar peace. If His people have still to go out to Him without the camp bearing His reproach, they have His company wherever they go. Sometimes they are confronted with the sea, sometimes they are shut up by the wilderness, but wherever they are they hear Him say 'This is the way, walk ye in it.'

Lord, with what courage and delight
I doe each thing,
When thy least breath sustaines my wing!
I shine, and move
Like those above,
And, with much gladnesse
Quitting sadnesse,
Make me faire dayes of every night.

Affliction thus meere pleasure is;
And hap what will,
If thou be in't, 'tis welcome still.[1]

With all this, the temper of Christmas is peculiarly the temper of hope. And why? Because Christmas reminds us that He has intervened. He said in the days of His flesh, 'Which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?' On Christmas Day He began visibly to build the tower. He has ever since laid stone upon stone, and His purpose is to finish it. This is the Christmas hope, and it is peculiarly needed in these days as a cordial for drooping spirits. We have learned, perhaps, the Easter hope better than the Christmas. We have a great deal more hope for the dead than we have for the living. Bishop King was, we think, right in saying that some little progress has been made in this way. The churchyards speak of love and hope and paradise regained. The Christian grave is understood to be not a sign of failure, not a beacon to be avoided, not the mark of a wreck gone down, but rather a goal obtained, the post where the race was won, the standard set up after victory. Our funerals are less overburdened by conventional signs of mourning. We are not so shy in speaking of those who have left us. But if Easter teaches us to hope for the life to come and the Church Triumphant, Christmas teaches us to hope for the life that now is and for the Church Militant. The extraordinary stress laid in the New Testament upon hope as a cardinal virtue of the Christian ought to be more fully recognised. We are on the winning side. Because Christ is with us we may be sure of the life, and energy, and reality, and triumph of the Kingdom of God. That kingdom which is not of this world is constantly affected by the changes in earthly conditions. Often it has seemed as if there were convincing arguments for despair; often it has seemed as if the powers of evil had inflicted a fatal disaster. But the Church has lived through the worst times of rebuke and oppression and plunder. The storms have passed and left it stronger. We may hope in God, expecting in His good time the outward tokens of His presence and His aid, and trusting Him when these are denied us.

In Worcester Cathedral there is a grave with one word inscribed, *Miserrimus*. Who was it that died broken-hearted? The question was long unanswered. It turned out that the word was on the tomb of Thomas Maurice, a kindly, gentle old man, whose heart was broken by the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, which extinguished the last hope of the exiled family to which he most faithfully adhered. He cherished his dream of allegiance as the one secret of his blameless life, and was eager to rest in a nameless grave if only the stone should witness by a single word his undying loyalty. But no Christian need ever go to his grave in despair of the Kingdom of Christ.

[1] H. Vaughan.

No Room.

Luke ii. 7.—'There was no room for them in the inn.'

WHAT was the cause of this tragedy? How came it that they had no room for Him except such as was found in a stable? We may say at once that it was not hostility. They meant to offer Him no indignity. It expressed no studied rejection of His great claims. It was mere preoccupation. They were just too busy to have anything to do

with that little pilgrim party which promised so poorly from the material point of view. They were obviously lacking in riches, and could not be profitable guests; and then, too, the place was crowded. It was a time when every available accommodation was called for, so that the people of the inn were too busy even to think of the obvious duty that presented itself to them in that request for room. They were simply too busy to recognize that here, at least, was a claim upon their human sympathy, which in their less occupied moments they never would have denied. And so Christ was merely crowded out. It is literally a fact that there was no room.

And without any doubt it is the same to-day. Every chamber of the soul is so filled with human interests that there is little room for Christ. There is little vital interest in Him. There is little, if any, time for Him. And this is so, simply because our time is demanded by a thousand other things, our interest is drawn off in a thousand other directions, and our life is crowded to the full with possessions and pleasures until, strange though it seems, there is no room for the Saviour except in the stable. And did we but know it, such preoccupation is merely decorated poverty. But if we are so preoccupied as to have no room for Jesus Christ in our life, then our life is a failure, and is, moreover, foredoomed to a far greater because an eternal failure. This is the test of everything—room for Christ.

Let us think of some of the common causes of this fatal preoccupation which characterizes so many lives. And let us think of them with a view to deal resolutely with them as we discover their unsuspected existence in our lives.

1. Firstly, and perhaps most widely, it is true that *a tyrant world* preoccupies us and enchains all our perceptions and powers. When we speak of the 'world' in this connection we use the term to express that spirit which rules in the majority of men's minds, and dominates their interest, claiming their life-power for other and unworthier purposes than the glory and service of God. It is not an exaggeration to say that those who come under its spell and tyranny cannot have room for Jesus Christ in their lives. For this is entirely true of the world in its customs, its conventions, its commerce, its ideals, its standards. It has no room for Christ. It is not bitterly or blatantly opposed to Him. It is not violently or blasphemously unbelieving. It is simply fully occupied with things which profit not, because they are not, and cannot be, related to the will and government of God. It gives itself over to things which are insufficient and unworthy. Over how many homes that you know would it be perfectly true to write, 'No room for Christ here'? Over how many shops and offices in our great cities would it be true to write, 'No room for Christ here'? Over how many theatres and places of entertainment would it be entirely true to write, 'No room for Christ here'? And these are centres of the world's life. Its main interests are in domestic concerns, social amenities, and commercial correspondences. These are the things around which all its activities circle. And these are the common preoccupations which exclude the Son of God from His own. For the world as such does not want Him, perceiving only too clearly what must be the manner both of His coming and of His company. There is no room for the Divine Disturber, for that is what Christ necessarily is.

¶ The essence of nineteen centuries of Christian history is here. The web of all the centuries is woven after the one pattern. Shut out at His birth, His fate has been the same ever since. He came with the message of humanity's renewal. He proclaimed the most revolutionary doctrine ever preached to men—that the pariahs of humanity, publicans, sinners, slaves, those ignorant of the law and therefore accursed, were all the sons of God; and that only one law was requisite, that men should love one another with a love that gleamed red with sacrificial blood. But what have men done with this evangel? They have shut it out! It was too beautiful for their gross hearts and their self-clouded eyes. It was also very difficult. It required the changed heart and the transfigured life. And that has always been most difficult—to transmute the self-centred into the God-centred and all it means.[1]

Strangely the wondrous story doth begin
Of that which came to pass on Christmas Day—
'The new-born babe within a manger lay
Because there was no room inside the inn.'

[1] Norman Maclean, *Victory out of Ruin*, 125.

No room for Him who came to conquer sin
And bid distress and mourning flee away!
So in the stable He was fain to stay
Whilst revelry and riot reigned within.
And still the same old tale is told again:
The world is full of greed and gain and glee,
And has no room for God because of them.
Lord, though my heart be filled with joy and pain,
Grant that it ne'er may find no room for Thee,
Like that benighted inn at Bethlehem! [1]

2. Not only a tyrant world but *a dominant passion* also makes it true to-day that there is no room for Christ. There is a controlling passion which is governing and colouring and influencing the whole of our inner being, so that we have not any desire for the company of Christ. That word 'passion' has come to have a sinister meaning which it does not always rightly carry. Passion may be a perfectly pure thing, not at all necessarily coarse or evil. For instance, one has a passion for study; and it is quite possible to crowd Jesus Christ out of life simply by the place allowed to intellectual ambitions. Another has a passion for art, to which he is giving his whole time and strength in order that he may attain to some artistic standard and goal which he has set before himself. The dominant passion may be for sport, or music, or society—things which are perfectly lawful in themselves, things which have a real and legitimate place in the scheme of every well-ordered life. But such things may and do become overlaid with evil, and are unhesitatingly condemned, despite their moral quality, both by conscience and by the Word of God, when they are allowed to become so dominant as to crowd Jesus Christ out of life.

It must be agreed that passion for anything which demands the devotion of the whole being is the disguised enemy of the Lord of love. Seen in this light, the fairest things are recognized as evil in intent and essence. Perhaps their greatest evil is that they tend to become despotic. One who yields himself to these things is perilously apt to come entirely under their dominion. Do you remember what the psalmist said about idols and those who make idols which, having eyes see not, and having hands handle not? He goes on to say that 'they that make them become like unto them, and so are all those that put their trust in them.' They that make them become like unto them! That is the evil in these things. They somehow transform us into their own likeness, deteriorating our lives by diverting our best energies from that for which we were created and redeemed. Our very capacity shrinks to the size of the thing upon which we set our love and devotion. And the tragedy of many a life is this, that idols tend to become ideals. We come to think there is nothing in life worth living for except the idol—except study, except sport, except social position and pleasure, except money getting, except those things which have become so utterly desirable to us that they have crowded Jesus Christ right out.

¶ The degradation of the ideal into the idol constitutes the real fall of man. [1]

¶ Then the Kings having denied Christ, made new gods and idols, and exposed them to the sight of nations, and ordered men to fall down and worship and fight for them.

And they made for the French an idol, and they called it Honour—and it was the same idol that in former times was called the *Golden Calf*.

And for the Spaniards they made an idol and called it *Political Preponderance*, and it was the same idol that the Assyrians adored under the name of *Baal*, and the Philistines under the name of *Dagon*, and the Romans under that of *Jupiter*.

And for the English their King made an idol, and called it *Sovereignty of the Seas*, and it was the same god that was formerly named *Mammon*.

And for the Germans they made an idol which they called Well-Being, the same that formerly had the names of *Moloch* and *Comus*.

And the people adored their idols.[2]

3. There is in some lives *an unshareable secret* which is the cause of the truth of these words, 'no room for Christ.' There are unspoken and even unformulated hopes and desires, which are secret to all but our own consciousness, and which are yet strong enough to exclude Christ. It may be an unshareable secret; and in turning our back upon Jesus Christ and allowing our grief to exclude Him from our life, what are we

[1] Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler.

[1] W. R. Thayer, *The Life and Times of Cavour*, i. 433.

[2] G. Robinson, *David Urquhart*, p. xi.

doing? We are just depriving ourselves, as so many of us do, of the friendship and fellowship of the One who would have interpreted our grief, and shown it to us as a part of the great love and purpose of God. He would have coloured it as the sunshine rising in the morning irradiates the dewdrops and makes every one shine like a gem with the golden glory of God. And what is true of our unshareable secrets, our griefs and burdens, is also true of our secret loves, our expectations and hopes of happiness and bliss. We need Christ to interpret all these, or we shall miss their true meaning and lose all the real good in them. How strange, then, is it that these very things which can be understood or realized only in His fellowship should be the causes of His exclusion from our lives. No room for Him because we think He has no sympathy with our deepest concerns!

Wilt thou not let Me in? I've waited long
  In silent supplication at thy side;
I came when youth poured forth her matin song,
  And now 'tis eventide.

Wilt thou not let Me in? Thou need'st not fear
  My presence would repress one fire that glows;
The voice that on the tree-top warbles clear
  Breaks not a leaf's repose.

I would not interrupt life's daily round,
  But only, in the singing of the soul,
Would bear thy steps more swiftly o'er the ground,
  More surely to the goal.

Wouldst thou not yet get back the joy of youth,
  The rainbow view, the spring-time of thy days,
The faith in loveliness, the trust in truth,
  The perfecting of praise?

Wouldst thou not see the shadow of the dial
  Retrace its path upon the opening hours,
Till morning, not untried, but cleansed by trial,
  Should light again the flowers?

Such is My promise: at the door I stand;
  My rest shall be thy power, My sleep thy waking;
The room thou yieldest shall thy heart expand
  O'er fields where day is breaking. [1]

[1] George Matheson, *Sacred Songs*, 118.

Simple Souls.

Luke ii. 8.—'There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.'

SIMPLE! That is a beautiful word when you look into it. Many words grow fresh and lovely when you take time to study them and to brush from them the dust of conventional usage. There ought to be a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Words, to provide resting-places for words which are overworked, to repair words which are knocked out of shape by the blows of controversy, and to restore to their proper service words which have been turned aside to base uses. 'Simple' is one of the words which have been badly used. 'He is a simple soul,' we say of someone whose wits go wool-gathering, and in the phrase there is a touch of pity, if not of contempt, which blurs the meaning and destroys the poetry of the word itself. Consider it again—simple, simplex, *sine plica*—without a fold. Duplicity is a doublefold condition; there may be something hidden, and hidden for a purpose, which does not appear upon the surface. Complexity is a many-fold condition; it has nooks and corners, perhaps necessary and most useful, but with plenty of room for hiding things if a man wants to do so. Simplicity is a condition of no-fold-at-all; it involves no concealments, no double dealings, no subterfuges, no casuistries; it is rare, but when you find it, it has a beauty all its own. Simple shepherds, tell us your secret.

A shepherd's life and character have always been a type of simplicity. Simplicity need not exclude profundity. Often the shepherd folk, alone with the high mountains and the wide spaces, have peered into unfathomable depths of thought of which the hurrying world had no time to dream. But as compared with the sophistications of courts, the complexity of great communities, the entanglements of abundant possessions, the shepherd's life is a simple life, and the shepherd's character is a simple character.

Ever since that unforgotten night when Mary brought forth her first-born Son and laid Him in a manger, many types of devotion have encompassed the marvellous event with their love and praise. The philosophers and theologians have come, and have found in the mystery of the

Holy Incarnation a theme for lifelong study and for the exercise of all their wisest faculties. The kings and the wealthy men have come, bringing more tangible and material offerings—gold, frankincense, myrrh, temples of marble, altars of alabaster, pomp of ritual—until the Babe has almost been hidden by the splendours of the devotion that has surrounded Him. The Arts have come—painting, music, sculpture—to lay at the feet of the new-born Beautiful the fairest beauty the world could produce—a tribute that was His by right. Yet the first feet which found their way to Bethlehem were the feet of simple shepherds—poor men with nothing in their hands to bring, unlearned men with no powers of complex thinking, plain men with no official raiment to trail behind them. 'There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them.' If we too could get back into their mood of mind, if we could attain their quality of heart, we might see the glory more clearly than we do. If the simple shepherds would only tell us their secret, it might be to us a gospel and a revelation.

One or two characteristic qualities of the simple heart are well illustrated in these shepherds of Bethlehem.

1. One is *a simple humility*.—There is no trace of pride because of the honour done to them—as little pride as there was in the child whom Jesus one day took and set in the midst. And when the marvel and the honour of that night were over they went back to their lowly task upon the hills of Bethlehem: they had been a King's heralds, yet they were content to be shepherds still. Simple shepherds, we would try to be like you here—not because we are your followers, but because we follow Him whom you found at Bethlehem, who, though He was in the form of God, took upon Him the form of a servant and became obedient.

2. The next is *a simple boldness*.—As you see them hastening off to Bethlehem, they seem to be the types and the pioneers of a new courage. A New Testament writer defines it for us; it is boldness to 'draw near.' It is not a courage lacking in reverence, its very simplicity is its shield and guide. These men are childlike; and children, though you would not send them out to fight an army, have a boldness which is all their own. They will look us in the face as their older brothers and sisters will not always do. They will ask questions and make suggestions which more sophisticated souls would hesitate to express. They will be at home with God in a way which almost alarms the sinner with his sins and confounds the sceptic with his doubts. This is very like the spirit of these men who 'came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger': they are bold to draw near: their simplicity makes them bold: if they need any other boldness, there is music still sounding in their hearts which is encouragement enough. This spirit we also covet, not because we are the followers of the shepherds, though they were the pioneers of our approach, but because we are the followers of the Babe who is yet more gloriously our pioneer, who Himself is our chief reason for courage as we come to the feet of God.

3. And then there is here *a simple joy*.—For these men were also the pioneers of a new gladness dawning that winter morning upon a waiting earth. 'The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all things that they had heard and seen.' It was an overflowing gladness, and in the rush and power of it these simple shepherds became messengers and apostles. 'The first apostles were shepherds, the second fishermen,' Faber says. But whether the witness to Christ be from shepherds, or from fishermen, or from lips more learned and famous, it never rises to the fullness of power and efficacy unless it has in it something of this primal note—the gladness of those who have found Christ for themselves, and who in overflowing love and joy are eager to share with others the treasure of His name.

Sweet, harmless lives! on whose holy leisure
  Waits Innocence and Pleasure,
Whose leaders to those pastures and clear springs
  Were Patriarchs, Saints, and Kings;
How happen'd it that in the dead of night
  You only saw true light,
While *Palestine* was fast asleep, and lay
  Without one thought of day?

Was it because those first and blessed swains
Were pilgrims on those plains,
When they receiv'd the promise, for which now
'Twas there first shown to you?

Each stirring wind and storm blew through their cots,
Which never harbour'd plots;
Only content, and love, and humble joys
Lived there without all noise;
Perhaps some harmless cares for the next day
Did in their bosomes play,
As where to lead their sheep, what silent nook,
What springs or shades to look;
But that was all; and now with gladsome care
They for the town prepare;
They leave their flock, and in a busie talk
All towards *Bethlem* walk
To see their soul's great Shepheard, who was come,
To bring all straglers home;
Where now they find him out, and, taught before,
That Lamb of God adore,
That Lamb whose daies great Kings and Prophets wish'd
And long'd to see, but miss'd.[1]

Wise Men and Shepherds.

Luke ii. 8.—'There were shepherds.'
Matt. ii. 1.—'There came wise men.'

THE birth of our Lord, like His resurrection, is inseparably bound up for the mind of Christendom with the manifestations which followed it. It is for the most part in the presence of the shepherds of Judah and the Magian pilgrims from the East that the Holy Babe presents Himself to our inward eye. For many of us, in this, even more than in other parts of Biblical history, our impressions have been unconsciously formed by pictures. The shepherds on the one side, the three kings from the East on the other, united in adoration of the newly-born Child in the midst, are constant elements of a variously represented scene, familiar to us through the devotion and the skill of several generations of painters. The conception which we have derived from this imaginative combination of incidents historically distinct is essentially a true one. Each of the two Evangelists who record the Nativity associates it in the closest manner with one of these two manifestations; and again it is only when the two events are brought together that their full significance becomes apparent. The two narratives are in all their particulars transparently independent of each other, and written without reference to each other; and yet in an unexpected way they are complementary to each other in their prophetic import. Together they shadow forth the union of the two peoples, Jew and Gentile, in the one new faith, in fulfilment of the highest aspirations of the older prophets. But it is the Evangelist of the Gentile Church who records the revelation of the Nativity to men of the faithful remnant of God's ancient people and their homage of praise and thanksgiving, while it is the Evangelist of the Hebrew Church who records the discovery of the Nativity by patient and devout watchers from among the heathen world, and their characteristic homage of costly gifts.

It is in the way of duty that heavenly voices are best heard. We cry out, often, for some revelation of the Supreme which shall compel us, in spite of ourselves, to turn our thoughts to heaven; and lo! all the time the music of heaven is ringing in our ears, and we hear it not. We hear it not because we have schooled ourselves to neglect those human voices by which God is ever drawing us to Himself. We complain—some of us—that we are by nature of a sceptical temperament, that we cannot bring ourselves to believe all that other people do, that the Divine glory is invisible to us, that the Vision of God is but the vision of a dream. But how has it been with us in the doing of every-day duty? Have we striven to be true and pure and honest and forbearing? Have we striven after peace and goodwill? If it be not so, little wonder is it that we do not hear the angelic voices which proclaim God's glory and man's deliverance. It is he that wills to do God's will that is taught of His doctrine.

Some think God's blessing must be sought afar,
And hurry forth amain,
Haply to find it where the deserts are,
And the slow dromedaries snarl and strain,
Or borne in old Elijah's rushing car
From the mid-court of Heaven's august demesne:—
And on their threshold, lo! they passed a man

Who stood and knocked, and brought it in the van
That meets the daily train.[1]

1. One Gospel tells of one kind of people who saw a star in the East and followed it; and another Gospel tells the same story of quite an opposite kind of people. Matthew says that the wise men of the time were the first to appreciate the coming of Christ. Luke says that it was the plainest sort of people, the shepherds, who first greeted that coming.

There is the same variety of impression still. Many people now write as if religion were for the magi only. They make of it a mystery, a philosophy, an opinion, a doctrine, which only the scholars of the time can appreciate, and which plain people can obey but cannot understand. Many people, on the other hand, think that religion is for plain people only; good for shepherds, but outgrown by magi; a star that invites the superstitious and ignorant to worship, but which suggests to scholars only a new phenomenon for science to explore. But the Christian legend calls both, the wise and the humble, to discipleship. Religion has both these aspects, and offers both these invitations. Religion is not theology. There are many things which are hidden from the magi, and are revealed to simple shepherds. But religion on the other hand, is not all for the simple. The man who wrote that there were many things hidden from the wise and prudent was himself a scholar. The central subject of the highest wisdom to-day is, as it always has been, the relation of the mind of man to the universe of God.

Thus both these types of followers are called. Never before was the fundamental simplicity of religion so clear as it is now; and never before was scholarship in religion so needed. Some of the secrets of faith are open to any receptive heart, and some must be explored by the trained and disciplined mind. The scholar and the peasant are both called to this comprehensive service. The magi and the shepherd meet at the cradle of the Christ.

2. But while both meet at the cradle they come by different roads. The wise men got their Christmas greeting after hard work. They had to journey from the East; they had days of seeking, nights of walking, hours of weariness. But the shepherds got their Christmas greeting without seeking it. They were not straining their eyes toward the sky. They were thinking of something else. Their gaze was on the ground; they were engaged in homely work; they were keeping watch over their flock. And all at once, unsought and unexpected, the light shone. What the wise men had seen after long struggle the shepherds beheld in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.

Whence this contrast? Can we account for it; can we explain it? Yes; very easily. It was just their attitude of mind that made the difference. The wise men were speculating, dreaming, thinking of nothing else, doing nothing else; they were so anxious about the Star that they nearly missed it. But the shepherds were engaged in daily duty. They were performing the common round, the household task, the drudgery of the appointed hour. And lo! while they were standing at the door, Christmas came in at the window. While they were doing the duty of earth, there flashed on them the glory of heaven. While they watched their flocks by night, there broke on them the angel of the day.

3. We could have no more impressive illustration of the truth that it is not our gifts, opportunities, advantages, but the use we make of them, on which our welfare depends. On kings and priests of an evil heart all the resources of Heaven are lavished in vain; while simple shepherds may learn more from a single song than the scribes from the whole canon of Scripture, and wise men may stake more on a mere peradventure than they will do on an admitted certainty. And is not this a truth appropriate to the season? At Christmas we feel it right to break through certain barriers by which we are too commonly separated one from another. At the season in which the Son of God assumed our common humanity, and by becoming the Brother of all men made all men brothers, we think with a special kindness of those who have somewhat less than a brother's share in this world's goods. Their outward conditions are not so happy as they should be—the injustice of man thwarting the bounty of God. He has given enough for all; but some of us have more than our share, others less. And if we really wish to show

[1] F. Langbridge, *Little Tapers*, 30.

that we love and respect our poorer brethren as we ought, if we wish that they should respect themselves, and not distrust the goodness of God because of the injustice of man, what thought will be more helpful to us, or to them, than this?—that our standing in the sight of God is determined by what we are, not by what we have; that those who have less outward advantage may have more inward wealth, that those who are last in gifts may be first in the faithful use of gifts. It is better to be learned than to be unlettered; it is better to live in large and ample conditions than in narrow and penurious conditions; but the best thing of all is to use well whatever we have, to carry a faithful and kindly heart into our outward conditions whatever they may be. And this the poor unlettered man may do no less than the rich or the wise. We may all stand round the cradle of Christ; but they stand nearest who come first. There is room for rich and poor, for sage and shepherd and scribe; but our ignorance, our poverty, our learning, or our wealth, will neither give us a place nor exclude us from it. There is room for all; and the place we take depends simply on the use we make of our teaching and gifts and opportunities.

Round the cradle of the Holy Child, signs of splendour and majesty mingled with the signs of poverty and lowliness. If His parents were poor, they were of royal blood. If He was 'the seed of the woman,' He was also 'the Son of God.' His birthplace, though 'little . . . among the thousands of Judah,' was great in virtue of noble historic memories and ancient predictions. His cradle was a manger; but wise men worshipped before it and poured royal gifts into the Virgin's lap. His advent was announced to simple shepherds; but it was announced by 'a multitude of the heavenly host.' Over the poor stable in which He lay there shone the star of a King. And as in His person and the circumstances of His birth, so also in His Church and service there is room for all the extremes of human condition, for rich and poor, learned and unlearned, bond and free; nay, to His eye, all these varieties of outward condition are nothing, and the faithful seeking heart is all.

The Message of Christmas.

Luke ii. 10.—'And the angel said unto them, Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people.'

THE angel's message to the shepherds strikes the right note of the Christmas feast: good tidings (or a gospel; it is the same in the Greek)—great joy—unto all people. Christmas is above all other days the day for glad thanksgiving. There are other festivals, perhaps, of equal importance, but upon this all the rest depend. If the glad tidings of Christmas Day be true, Good Friday and Easter and Ascension follow upon it naturally; if this were not true, no one of the others would have any real meaning for us. Other festivals speak to us of what the Lord has done; this speaks to us of what He is. It is well to be quite clear about it: we do not keep the birthday of Jesus Christ as we might keep that of a holy man or of a great religious teacher; as we might keep the birthday of Socrates or Plato, of Abraham or Moses; for in the words of the Epistle to the Hebrews, 'Moses verily was faithful' in God's house 'as a servant, . . . but Christ as a Son over his own house.' We keep it because we know and are sure that He who was born on this day is at one and the same time nearer to us than we are to one another, and also so entirely one with the Father that He could say, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.' In theological language, we say that He is 'God of the substance of His Father, begotten before all worlds; and Man of the substance of His mother, born in the world.' But we must always remember that this careful language does not contain anything more than the Bible statements given above. As one has said, 'Putting this into plain words, it simply means that He is as Divine as the Father, as human as ourselves. This is as much as you need believe, for the complications of the Athanasian Creed add positively nothing to it but a warning not to explain it away. If He is not perfect God and perfect Man, we have borne false witness of Him, and you had much better look out for a new gospel than try to patch up the old one.' No, we cannot say less than this; and it is the assured conviction that this is the plain and simple truth that gives all its joy and gladness to Christmas Day. Other people may keep

it; thank God they do; but it is only they who know what Jesus Christ is, with all the certainty of experience, who are really responsible for it that Christmas Day is still kept in the world.

There are three special points in the message.

1. The first has reference to our Lord Himself. During the last hundred years or thereabouts there has been more careful study given to the life of our Lord than at any previous period since He walked this earth. Often, no doubt, it has been imperfect, sometimes it has been marred by pre-suppositions and prejudices of one kind or another; sometimes it has been misleading in its very minuteness, in the way that all microscopic study of a small part of anything may be misleading, ignoring as it does the essential character of the whole. But on the whole it has been sincere and thorough and honest, and it has not been without valuable result. Few real students of our Lord's life in any age have failed to come to the conclusion, 'Thou seemest human and Divine.' But students of former days used to separate the elements of His life into those human and those Divine, and say that some of His acts were done as man and some as God. The tendency, perhaps the inevitable consequence, was to 'divide the Person' of our Lord, and so to make Him unreal. In these latter days, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we have learned to see that Christ is not, and cannot be, divided; that He is one throughout, whether ruling the waves or asleep on the pillow; the same in the house of Simon the Pharisee as on the Cross of Calvary. It is not now and then, but throughout, that He is my human Example—as well in His marvellous powers as in His home-life; it is not now and then, but throughout, that He is the Revelation of the Father—as well when He wept over Lazarus as when He said 'Come unto me.' He is the Revelation of the Father to me, and He is the Revelation of me to myself; and yet, whilst He reveals to me my baseness as I never could have known it else, He makes me realize that there is that in me that none but God Himself can ever satisfy. That, then, is one lesson: Christ is not divided; I need not be afraid of making Him too human or too Divine, if only I remember that He is one.

¶ When speculation began to play about this wonderful personality, to separate it into faculties, to divide it into a dual nature, to mark the line between the human and the divine, then straightway the clear and beautiful figure of Christ began to loom strange and mysterious in the thought of Christendom. In losing the sense of the reality of his human nature and life, men lost closeness of touch, intimacy of feeling, frankness and simplicity of fellowship with him; he receded from their view, the outlines of his face became shadowy, the tones of his voice seemed remote and alien; the memory of his works was suffered to surround the worker like a magical veil through which mortal eyes must not strive to look. He who had lived, so to speak, in the open; who loved highways, the sea-shore, and the places where men gather, no less than mountain solitudes and desert places; who ate at family tables, used homely speech, cared for little children, and spoke intimately to fallen women, gradually withdrew from the near gaze of men into the infinite distance where God was exiled from the world he had made, and became himself a kind of second divinity; more tender than the father—had he not human memories and associations?—but still far above the touch of human hands and the sound of human voices.

In the history of human thought few things have been more strange or pathetic than the loss of the sense of the reality of the humanity of Christ; for no revelation was ever more complete than that which set the figure of the man Christ Jesus in the crowded highways of the world.[1]

2. Secondly, we sometimes read in the newspapers, whose business it is to do a little superficial thinking for those who will not take the trouble to think for themselves, that the Christian faith is 'on its trial.' So we might have been told at any time during the last nineteen centuries; and it is true in exactly the same sense as it is true that purity or justice is on its trial. Purity and justice are always on their trial, because people are always trying them afresh, and so is the Christian faith too; but the fact of the matter is that it is not really the Christian faith that is on its trial, but we who are on our trial. It is never an easy thing to believe; there have always been obstacles, and always will be. The

[1] H. W. Mabie, *The Life of the Spirit*, 46.

tendency of the age runs counter now to this, now to that, part of the Creed; and the current presentment of the faith errs now in this respect, now in that. No, it is not an easy thing to believe, but it is always possible. And surely the same rule applies here that applies to purity or justice: you hold fast by them, not because they are free from difficulties, not because you are never tempted to desert them, but because they are obviously the highest and best thing you know, and you could only count yourself a defaulter if you betrayed them. Does not the same rule apply here? A very heavy responsibility will lie upon you if you hang back half-heartedly from the practice of your faith because of indolent and half-hearted doubts and scruples, or if you lightly allow yourself to be discouraged in God's glorious quest.

3. But thirdly, there are those who, owing either to their training, or their lack of opportunity, or the love of society round about them, have real and solid difficulty in the way of belief. Has Christmas Day any message for them? Assuredly it has, and the best of all messages. For we can never remind ourselves too often that it is not our believing in things that makes them true, but that we believe them because they are true. Even if every single Christian in the world were to lose his faith, that would not alter THE FAITH. Even if we had never heard of it, that would not alter the fact that once in time the Son of God came down, and lived a true human life in fashion of our flesh. It is good for me to remember it for myself, in my hours of weakness—

> It fortifies my soul to know
> That though I falter, Truth *is* so,
> That howsoe'er I stray and range,
> Whate'er I do, *Thou* dost not change;
> I steadier step when I recall
> That though I slip, *Thou* dost not fall.

And it is good for me to remember it for my brother too, even though he knows nought of it. 'Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.' Assuredly they are for him as well as for me, for him too, even though he cannot hear, so long as he withholds not his hearing, but has the will to hear. For just, impartial study, and careful, exact scrutiny, and brave, patient waiting, yes, and honest doubt too, all have their value in the sight of the Incarnate Lord, whose eyes are ever looking to see the element of good in all our efforts; and assuredly He sees them there.

The Incarnation.

Luke ii. 11.—'Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.'

1. No event is so charged with meaning as a birth; nothing is so incalculable as a young child. To sight what is it?—a tiny, helpless, dependent morsel of life, unable to think, unconscious of itself, with no speech but a wail. Blot it out, who had missed this creature save its mother? What had the world lost? Nothing save a unit out of millions, another labourer, perhaps another criminal. To vision, however, a new force enters into life with the coming of a child, whether he be born in a cottage or in a palace. What impresses a thoughtful person as he looks on an infant is not its futility but its possibility, not what it is but what it is going to become. There is one who has ever something of this imagination. As she looks on her babe's face, the mother dwells on a hundred signs which, to her fondness, prophesy the coming greatness, and she treasures them up in her heart. She is shy, and guards these prophecies jealously; it may be that they will be but spring blossom to be scattered by the wind, but it may also be that they will set into the fruit of autumn. Geography may be rearranged, or history rewritten, or nations redeemed, or the unseen revealed, by this little one when God's hand is on him and he comes into his kingdom. Has it not happened that a single year is lifted out of a century and a day therein glorified, because on that day a poet, a painter, a conqueror, an apostle has been born? A child was born in a roadside inn nineteen hundred years ago and time has been redated from that day.

> When Mary sang to Him, I wonder if
> His baby hand stole softly to her lips,
> And, smiling down, she needs must stop her song
> To kiss and kiss again His finger-tips?
>
> I wonder if, His eyelids being shut,
> And Mary bending mutely over Him,
> She felt her eyes, as mothers do to-day,
> For very depth of love grow wet and dim?

Then did a sudden presage come to her
Of bitter looks and words and thorn-strewn street ?
And did she catch her breath and hide her face
And shower smothered kisses on His feet ?

We bend over this Infant as He lies in that manger at Bethlehem, and as we do so, strange scenes in His after-life rise up in our memory. Those little, tender feet, unable to sustain the infant frame, are yet to tread upon the roughened waters of the stormy lake, as men tread the solid earth. At the touch of that little, feeble hand, the blind eye is to open, and the tied tongue to be unloosed, and diseases of all kinds are to take wings and flee away. That soft, weak voice, whose gentle breathings in His infant slumbers can scarcê be heard, is to speak to the winds and the waves, and they shall obey it; is to summon the dead from the sepulchre, and they shall come forth. Who, then, and what was He, whose birth the angels celebrated in such high strains? None other than He of whom Isaiah, anticipating the angels, had declared, 'Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called The Prince of Peace.' It was He, the Word, who was from the beginning with God, and who was God, who was thus made flesh, and came to dwell among us. This is in truth the central fact or doctrine of our religion; the mystery of mysteries; the one great miracle of Divine, everlasting love. Admit it, and all the other wonders of the Saviour's life become not only easy of belief—they appear but the natural and suitable incidents of such a history as His. Deny it, and the whole gospel narrative becomes an inexplicable enigma. The very heart of its meaning taken out of it, you may try to turn it into a myth or fable if you please; but a credible story it no longer is. No; not credible even in that part of it into which nothing of the supernatural enters. Christ was either what He claimed to be, and what all those miraculous attestations conspire to establish that He was; He was either one with the Father, knowing the Father as the Father knew Him, doing whatever the Father did —so direct and full a revelation of the Father that it could be truly said that he who had seen Him had seen the Father likewise—or His character for simplicity and honesty and truthfulness stands impeached, and the whole fabric of Christianity is overturned.

2. St. Luke's leading ideas of the Incarnation and Birth of Jesus Christ are: (1) The Incarnation is a reality—physically, with the conception, formation, and nativity of the Holy Child; historically, with a definite starting-point in time and place of a truly human life. (2) The Incarnation is a fact of universal import. 'When Thou tookest manhood upon Thee to deliver it, Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's Womb.' The redemption which issues from the Incarnation as from its vital principle is not partial and 'particular.' It is the fountain-head of a message addressed to every form of sin and misery in every land. It is the implied starting-point not only of the gospel itself, but of the appended Church-history by the same hand which tells us how 'the message, going forth from the upper-chamber, spread to temples, houses, streets, market-places, inns, prisons, camps, courts, chariots, ships, countries, cities, islands; to Jews, Gentiles, magistrates, officers, soldiers, eunuchs, prisoners, slaves, freemen, women, children, sailors, reaching finally Athens and Rome.' The man is the fitting symbol throughout; it is the universal gospel of the universal Incarnation.

(1) The Incarnation is *real*. At a definite date in human history a Divine Person assumed human nature by a birth in time of a virgin's womb, in a scene of incomparable beauty, with the admiring sympathy of the hosts of heaven, with the instinctive enthusiastic rapture of elect and meditative souls. That birth, wrought by a new contact with the creative power of God the Holy Ghost, was a true human birth. Whatever human mothers contribute to the entire production of their children was contributed by her who is truly the Mother of Jesus—viz., conception, formation, nativity. It was a true human body. There was with equal truth a true human soul—with a will really capable of choice; with an intellect really capable of learning; with really felt desires for sustenance as regarded food, for sympathy as regarded companionship, for deliverance as regarded pain; with real sinless emotions such as indignation at wrong, pity, wonder, vivid expectation.

¶ The clear recognition of the normal human life of Christ is one of the great gains of modern religious thought. To His disciples, who felt the touch of His hand and heard the tones of His voice; to the little group of twelve who often lived with Him in the intimacy of the most familiar intercourse; to the throngs who waited to see Him pass, or to hear those simple, beautiful, and searching talks—to all these Christ was never less than man, however much greater than man. There was no confusion of two personalities in the thought of His contemporaries; no blurring of the clear outlines of a warm, vital, real human career; no substitution of a strange, unhuman, incomprehensible personality in place of the son of Mary, who was born at Bethlehem, had gone up to the Temple while yet a child and talked with the doctors of the law, had spoken in many places in Judea and Galilee, had died at Jerusalem as other men die, and been buried as other men were buried.[1]

(2) The Incarnation is *universal*. The remedy is not merely for the Jewish race; or for a selected few, the special favourites of heaven. It is for the whole diseased material of human nature, for all the sinful, the weary, the suffering; for the whole great army of the guilty and miserable in every land. That which the Son of God took into real union with Himself is humanity. Hence, in the Gospel before us, Jesus meets with impartial sympathy all who cross His path. Hence, just before He leaves the earth, He commands His disciples to preach 'repentance and remission of sins in His name unto all the nations.' Hence also the Gospel record of 'all that Jesus began both to do and to teach' is the fitting prelude to a narrative which tells us of all which the ascended Jesus continued to do and to teach from heaven by the agency of His servants 'in Jerusalem and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.' The leading idea of this universal Incarnation stands in the forefront of the universal gospel. It finds a nobler and loftier expression in Simeon's song—'Thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples, a light for the unveiling of the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel.'

¶ No man has ever come near to Jesus Christ, or lain with head on His breast as John lay in the upper chamber, without hearing the heart of the Lord beating with that passion of love for all men which would bless and save humanity. No race can appropriate Jesus Christ to itself alone, saying 'He is mine.' The heart of Christ throbs with the love not of one race, but of all races—the love of universal humanity. And the man who has listened to the beating of His heart will refuse to pause at any frontier: he will recognize no boundaries in the outflow of that love to men. In the love of God to men, flowing to them in Christ Jesus, there can be no compartments. To that love the necessities of men, wherever they are, will unceasingly call. When the Church refuses to hear the call of human need from beyond the Himalayas, or from the recesses of Africa, the Church will have ceased to share in her Lord's passionate love to men.[1]

[1] H. W. Mabie, *The Life of the Spirit*, 43.

The Witness to the Incarnation.

Luke ii. 11.—'Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.'

If the incarnation of the Saviour of mankind had stood alone; if nothing had led up to it; if nothing had sprung from it; if the witnesses to it were untrustworthy liars, who were morally capable of having palmed off upon the world a conscious fiction—then doubt would have been natural. But when the event stands as it does,—quite apart from religion—as the central point of the destinies of mankind; when we see that all the history of the past led up to it, and that all the illimitable future was, and must still be, dominated by it; when we see how it fulfilled the prophecies and yearnings of humanity among the heathen as well as among the Jewish race, and how it has been the germ of all that was best and greatest in the progress of the ages which have followed, the fact ceases to stand alone. Had 'the man Christ Jesus' been but one of millions, had He been distinguished above His fellows merely by ordinary human greatness, doubt might have been excusable. But when we see in that Babe lying in the cradle One of whom all the Prophets had spoken, and One to whom ever since that Nativity—amid the intensification of all light, and all knowledge, and amid the undreamed-of splendour of immeasureable progress—alike the

[1] Norman Maclean, *Can the World be won for Christ?* 140.

humblest and the greatest of human intellects have looked; when we see that (to use the words of the German historian whom a study of history converted to Christianity from unbelief) 'Christ lifted the gate of the centuries off its hinges with His bleeding hand,' the case becomes far different. The greatness of Jesus, even if we regard Him simply as a man among men, not only transcends, but transcends inconceivably and immeasurably, the combination of all the forms and varieties of human greatness. The ages which have followed have all looked to Him first, Him last, Him midst, and without end.

As they have contemplated Him in the Unity of the Father and the Holy Spirit, they have exclaimed, 'Whom have we in heaven but thee?' and as they have felt the penetrative, all-absorbing influence of His human personality, they have exclaimed, 'There is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.'

1. History has borne its witness to Him. The Jews, who in their decadence listened no longer to Moses and the Prophets, but to Sadducean priests and posing Pharisees, fell into utter and immediate ruin in accordance with His prophecy. The grandeur of the Roman Empire was humbled to the dust, and vanished before Him. The Northern nations, abandoning their ignorance and savagery, knelt humbly before 'The White Christ,' and, conquerors though they were, accepted the religion of the Christians whom they had conquered. 'In all my study of the ancient times,' wrote the German historian Johann von Müller, 'I have always felt the want of something, and it was not till I knew our Lord that all was clear to me; with Him there is nothing that I am not able to solve.'

The great rulers have claimed their authority from Him alone, and have confessed His absolute pre-eminence. The first Christian Emperor wove upon the labarum of his armies His cross of shame; and it is set in jewels on the diadems of many kings. The oldest crown of Europe—the famous iron crown of Lombardy—was venerated most because it was believed to be made of an iron nail from the cross on Golgotha. 'Bow thy head, Sicambrian,' said St. Remigius to Clovis after the victory of Tolbiac; 'burn what thou hast adored, adore what thou hast burned.' Godfrey Bouillon when crowned King of Jerusalem, would not wear a crown of gold where his Saviour had worn a crown of thorns. Rudolph of Hapsburg, when no sceptre could be found amid the tumult of his coronation, grasped a crucifix and swore that that should be his sceptre. Napoleon, the last great conqueror of modern days, said in his exile, 'I know men, and Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christ and all other religions whatsoever the distance of infinity; from the first day to the last He is the same—always the same, majestic, simple, infinitely firm and infinitely gentle. Between Him and whomsoever else in the world there is no possible term of comparison.'

2. Poetry is the choicest flower of all human thought; and just as the greatest poets of the ancient world who knew God—poets like Isaiah, and Amos, and the Psalmists—had sung of the coming Christ, so, since He was born, all the supremest poets without exception — Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Goethe, Wordsworth, Browning, Tennyson—have come and laid their garlands most humbly at His feet. Truly

> Piety hath found
> Friends in the friends of Science, and true prayer
> Has flowed from lips wet with Castalian dews.

Nay, even in the ancient heathen world, supreme poets have stretched blind hands of faith and prayer to the Unknown Deliverer. Æschylus, sublimest of the Athenian tragedians, in his greatest drama, makes Hermes say to Prometheus: 'Expect not at all any termination of this thy anguish till some one of the gods appear as a successor to thy toils, and be willing to go down into the unlighted Hades, and around the gloomy depths of Tartarus.' And Virgil, sweetest of all the Roman singers, wrote in his Fourth Eclogue a prophecy of the Golden Age which was at hand, and of the Child whose manhood would inaugurate a reign of peace in a world of beauty; and this he wrote in such strains as almost elevated him to the rank of an inspired Seer.

3. Philosophy has occupied the minds of some

of the loftiest of the human race, and it has been the lifelong pursuit of many a

> Grey spirit, yearning in desire
> To follow knowledge, like a guiding star,
> Beyond the utmost bounds of human thought.

But these grave and earnest students of the problem of the world have often either sunk into despondency, like Zeno and Marcus Aurelius, for lack of the hope which Christ has inspired in the hearts of men; or, like Plato, they have looked yearningly forward to some Unseen Deliverer whom as yet they knew not, though they were convinced of the awful necessity for His Advent. Kant used indignantly to repel every word spoken against the historic Saviour, and regarded himself as a mere bungler, interpreting Him as best He could. 'Philosophy,' said Pico della Mirandola '*seeks* truth . . . Religion *possesses* it.'

4. Art reveals to us the Unseen. It teaches us to see, and what to see, and to see *more* than we see with our bodily eyes; and since Christ was born all the greatest Art in the world, without exception, has been consecrated to His glory. To Him have been reared those 'Epic poems in stone,' those glorious Churches and Cathedrals, shadowy with immortal memories, which make us exclaim,

> They dreamt not of a perishable home
> Who thus could build;

and under whose hallowed shade we feel that

> Bubbles burst, and folly's dancing foam
> Melts if it cross the threshold.

To His glory the greatest of sculptors set free the imprisoned angels which, to his imagination, seemed to be struggling in the blocks of unhewn marble; to His glory Giotto and Leonardo, Raphael and Luini, Vittore Pisano and Lorenzo di Credi, Giovanni, Bellini and Carpaccio, Albrecht Dürer and Holbein—and with them the greatest of all the painters, down to our own Millais, and Burne-Jones and Holman Hunt—have devoted the strongest and purest of their powers. For love of Him, and with no thought of gain, Fra Angelico and Sandro Botticelli painted their soft and silent pictures, even as long centuries earlier the poor and persecuted Christians of the catacombs had made the walls of those dark corpse-crowded galleries bright with their emblems of Orpheus, the Dove, the Fish, the Vine, and the Fair Shepherd with the lamb or kid upon His shoulders. From the earliest dawn of the gospel down to the present day, no pictures have been comparable in greatness to those in which the supremest artists have consecrated to the memory of Christ the glory of fair colours, and the inspiration of hallowed thoughts.

5. And, to take one other all-embracing sphere of human intellect, the sphere of Science, in that region, too, the most eminent human souls—men like Copernicus, Bacon, Leibnitz, Descartes, Haller, Pascal, Ray, Franklin, Herschel, Agassiz, Faraday, Kelvin, Lister, and many others—not losing sight of the Creator in the multitudinous marvels of His creatures, have looked to Christ as their Lord and their God. 'A little Philosophie,' as Bacon said, 'inclineth a man's mind to Atheisme, but depth in Philosophie bringeth men's minds about to religion.' Kepler wrote of Christ with the profoundest reverence, and Newton—'the whitest of human souls' as well as one of the most richly endowed—raised his adoring eyes to heaven in uttermost simplicity and sincerely believed in the Lord Jesus Christ with all his heart. The first mortal eyes which ever observed the transit of Venus were those of Jeremiah Horrocks, then a humble curate at Hoole. He hurried to his telescope in the intervals between three Sunday services, and though his observation was of such consummate astronomical importance, he recorded in his diary—and the sentence is carved upon the tablet placed to his memory two centuries later in Westminster Abbey—that he broke off his work to go to the humble service in the little village church—'*ad majora avocatus quae ob haec parerga negligi non decuit.*'

On one occasion a friend, Sir Henry Acland, found Michael Faraday in tears, with his head bent over an open Bible. 'I fear you are feeling worse,' he said. 'No,' answered Faraday, 'it is not that; but why, oh, why will not men believe the blessed truths here revealed to them?' A humble and reverent study of the laws which God has impressed upon the Universe has made

> The pale-featured sage's trembling hand

Strong as a host of armed deities,
Such as the blind Ionian fabled erst:

and yet of those sages—from Copernicus to Faraday, and down to the most eminent of our living students of Science—the foremost have not only had faith in God, but have also believed rightly in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

6. But, after all, the strongest part of the evidence to us is that we have 'the witness in ourselves.' We know that God is He 'who also stamped us as with a seal for Himself, and gave us the earnest'—at once pledge and part payment—'of the Spirit of our hearts.' It is 'with the heart' that 'man believeth unto righteousness.' If we would see Christ, we must, as Origen said, leave the crowd of faithless disciples with the demoniac whom they cannot cure, and must ascend the mountain top. Of every true Christian it may be said that 'His seed is in him!' And if 'the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God' because 'they are foolishness unto him,' yet spiritual things 'are spiritually discerned.' They who are spiritually-minded recognize the truth not only by the reason, but by the heart. 'Christian faith is a grand cathedral, with divinely-pictured windows. Standing without you see no glory, nor can possibly imagine any; standing within, each ray of light reveals a harmony of unspeakable splendour.'

Jesus—Christ—Lord.

Luke ii. 11.—'A Saviour which is Christ the Lord.'

HERE are three titles (for Jesus means Saviour)—Jesus, Christ, Lord.

1. When I think of Him as 'Jesus' I recall His *earthly life;* for that was His human name. He made Himself one with me in the experience of life. He laboured, suffered, obeyed as I am called to do. Sin alone excepted, not one of my human experiences was foreign to Him. He found the world to be to Him just what I find it to be to me, a place where faith and love and hope are always being put to the test, where griefs and hardships and temptations have all to be endured; and in these He is not only my Holy Example, but also my sympathizing Friend. In all my human emergencies He can say, 'No strange thing is happening to you, I myself passed through the same.'

2. When I think of Him as 'Christ' I am recalling His *substitutionary life:* for that was His official name as the Sinbearer anointed to be both Priest and Victim at the altar of sacrifice where 'He offered up himself.' It was not as 'Jesus' but, as 'Christ' that He was 'made sin for' me and died 'the just for the unjust, that he might bring' me 'to God.' He was sent as Jesus that He might be Christ. And, being 'delivered for my offences, he was raised again for my justification.' His death was the payment of my infinite debt. His resurrection was God's receipt for the payment in full: He carried the whole burden of my sin into the grave where He was buried, and left it there: and now I can look upon His glorious risen face and say, 'Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back,' assured that He will never go back to that grave to look for one of them.

3. When I think of Him as 'Lord' I am rejoicing in His *heavenly life:* for His self-sacrifice was the pathway that led to His supremacy. 'For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living.' The disciples, before His glorification, called Him 'Master and Lord'—their Lord, because their Master; but He said, 'I your Lord and Master'—your Master because your Lord. His human teachership bulked more largely in their thoughts than His Divine Sovereignty did. They hardly knew Him yet as 'Lord of all.' But these same disciples, after His glorification, almost never spoke of Him as 'Master,' nearly always as 'Lord.' I call Him 'Lord'—my Lord and Saviour, my Lord for ever, because He has been my Saviour first. By His love for me, even to death, He has won the right to be my King. I owe Him all, and I give Him all; all He claims, and all He asks. I praise Him, and I enthrone Him too. I give Him the undisputed authority over me, over all my feelings, all my powers, and all my possessions as well. I have been bought with a price, and am therefore no longer my own but His, to do in me, by me, through me, with me, what He will.

The great Vine left its glory to reign as Forest King,
'Nay,' quoth the lofty forest trees, 'we will not have this thing';
. . . . . .
Nevertheless the great Vine stooped to be the Forest King,
While the forest swayed and murmured like seas that are tempesting:
Stooped and drooped with thousand tendrils in thirsty languishing;
Bowed to earth and lay on earth for earth's replenishing;
Put off sweetness, tasted bitterness, endured time's fashioning;
Put off life and put on death:—and lo it was all to bring
All its fellows down to a death which hath lost the sting,
All its fellows up to a life in endless triumphing,—
I a king, and thou a king, and this King to be our King.[1]

A Saviour.

Luke ii. 11.—'Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord' (RVm 'Anointed Lord').

1. The word 'Saviour' is used here for the first time in the New Testament of the Messiah Himself; and only once again does it appear—in John iv. 42, where the Samaritans, speaking of our Lord, say: 'We have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world.' The word or title 'Saviour' had been used in the worship of heathen deities, and presumably the kings of Egypt and Syria, the Ptolemies and they who took to themselves the title *Soter* or Saviour, derived it from association with the worship of national or protecting deities. Even the Emperor of Rome, Augustus, according to extant inscriptions, was honoured with this title, and identified himself with the personification of Divine dignity as a Saviour. But it is not at all necessary for us to assume that there is here any intentional reference to the custom of associating the title with royal personages. In immediate proximity to the words 'in the city of David,' this word 'Saviour' is more naturally to be understood as descriptive of the Messiah's work of deliverance predicted in the Hebrew Scriptures, eagerly expected by the common people, and shortly to be expanded into the loftiest and most spiritual interpretation.

The title must of course be understood in such a sense or senses as it could bear to the shepherds. It would suggest pre-eminently a deliverer from enemies, and so from all things which make war on the life and peace of man. The earlier and cruder ideal of salvation or deliverance, which took no heed of any enemies or evils that did not come from without, was rife enough in those late days. It was the spell by which one false Messiah after another drew to his standard an unrepentant and turbulent multitude. But the prophets had from first to last been unwearied in setting forth the insufficiency of this ideal, which indeed made the Saviour of Israel to differ in no essential respect from the saviour deities of heathen nations; and no one who had entered into the teaching of the prophets could have failed to learn a better faith. Every holy and humble man of heart in Israel knew by this time the futility of deliverance without when unaccompanied by deliverance within. To such men there would have been small satisfaction in release from vassalage to the Roman yoke or from the internecine violence which filled the land, so long as the whole head of the nation was sick, and its whole heart faint. The promises on which they rested were rather such as those in which Jehovah declared that He would 'turn his hand upon' the people, and 'purely purge away its dross'; 'redeeming Zion through judgment, and her returning ones through righteousness.' In a word, their highest hope of a Saviour would be precisely expressed by the language which, as we read in St. Matthew, the angel used in announcing to Joseph the approaching birth: 'He shall save his people from their sins.' How much indeed was involved in salvation from sin; by what means it could be wrought; and, above all, how the self-mastery and self-surrender which it demanded from the delivered people were themselves possible only in and through a Saviour above them—these were points that as yet lay in obscurity. For men who knew wherein consisted the fundamental plagues of their nation and of themselves the simple title 'Saviour' was a sufficient assurance.

[1] Christina Rossetti.

2. This word 'Saviour' gives us the keynote of our text. We celebrate not merely the birth of a great Man, greatest of great men; the birth of a great Teacher, most inspiring of all inspiring teachers; the birth of a great Hero, giving to life a new inspiration and a new significance; we celebrate the advent of a Saviour.

There is great cause for gratitude because of the great teachers who have been in the world. A great teacher who turns a page in life's book and gives a new revelation and a new wisdom is a gift to be thankful for. And surely we all of us can see that Jesus is the greatest of great teachers. If the world owes anything to the long line of preachers, from Paul downwards, who have from pulpits given inspiration, life, hope, uplift to men; if it owes anything to its great apostolic preachers and Apostles through the ages of Christendom, it owes it all to Christ. For they all gladly bow the knee to Him, and all gladly confess that, whatever wisdom they have, whatever influence they possess, whatever largeness of thought they have gained, these they have derived from His lips, His life, His inspiration.

The world owes a great debt to the great philanthropists. But all that is owed to Florence Nightingale, to John Howard, to George Peabody is owed to Christ. The great benefactors of humanity, for the most part, acknowledge their indebtedness to Christ; and those who do not still get their new thought of life, their new thought of beneficence, from the One who, though rich, for our sakes became poor. Philanthropy took a new birth, as wisdom took a new birth, in the birth of Christ.

And how much we owe to our great heroes! But these great heroes owe to the Hero of heroes the inspiration of new life. For He who gave men a new thought of wisdom when He taught them that wisdom is spiritual, and He who gave them a new thought of possession when He gave them the thought that possession was an opportunity, gave them a new thought of life when He gave them the thought that life was service.

But more than all we owe to Christ as the uplifter and inspirer of teachers, or as benefactor and inspirer of benefactors, or as a hero and an inspirer of heroes, we owe to Him by reason of this, that He is the Saviour.

We need a Saviour—one who will strike at the root of our woe, and plant in our heart the principle of righteousness, so giving peace. Christ is that Saviour. Sin cursed the race, and filled the world with shame, fear, wretchedness, and despair, until, in the fullness of the times, the Saviour appeared to purge the evil leaven, and pour into the veins of the race a new life, rich in power, health, and blessing.

He is a Saviour both Divine and universal.

(1) *A Divine Saviour.*—'Which is Christ the Lord.' 'A babe wrapped in swaddling clothes.' What a picture of helplessness. But look at that Babe, manger, and clothes in the light of to-day. Stumble not at the despised acorn; rather consider the mighty oak which springs out of it, filling with spreading branches all the sky. Out of that stable has grown the civilized world. The manger was more than all thrones, the swaddling clothes more imperial than purple raiment, the Babe was verily King of kings and Lord of lords. The humble birthplace witnessed the origin of the force which destroyed the religions of the old world, the origin of the movement which has created a new earth. It is not difficult now to believe in the Divinity of the wonderful Child. How can we do anything else!

(2) *A universal Saviour.*—'Good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all the people.' It has been said, 'A nation is not made by men, but by a man'; and history supplies many illustrations of the truth of the saying. An individual arises out of an obscure and unorganized people, and by his extraordinary power and prowess welds feeble, scattered tribes into a great, conquering empire. A solitary genius creates nations, makes history for ages. One man, like Alexander or Napoleon, changes the map of the world; another, like Caxton, the intellectual character of the world; another, like Newton or Darwin, the science of the world; another, like Watt or Stephenson, the industrial aspect of the world; so once appeared One who touched and transformed the moral thought and life of the world. 'On earth peace.' Not in Judæa merely, or Greece, or Rome, but everywhere. The Saviour of the world. The unity of the universe shattered by sin is restored in Christ.

¶ Each one who is born into the human race is of one blood with all the rest, and could there-

fore influence all the rest if his influence were strong enough. Each sinner, however, can at the best influence only a certain number of people. But when Christ, the Son of God, entered the human family, and when His human nature had at last become wholly united to His divinity, then there was no limit to the amount of influence He might have on the whole of the rest of the human family. It takes a long time to make His influence felt throughout the race, and still longer to induce men to submit to it—in other words, to be subdued by His love. But the full salvation of the whole race was in a sense accomplished at Christ's death, though the long process by which the race actually becomes new through Christ's influence was only then about to begin.[1]

3. But of the newly-born Saviour Himself there were other characteristics to be named. 'A Saviour who is an anointed Lord.' We can hardly doubt that to the ears of men of that generation the compound phrase would suggest the Messiah, the Anointed of Jehovah, whose image had come to unite many scattered lineaments of ancient prophecy. It might represent not unfitly the mysterious designation in the Book of Daniel, familiar to us in the form 'Messiah the Prince'; and precisely as here, it stands more than once among the Messianic aspirations of those pathetic Jewish hymns which after ages strangely called the Psalms of Solomon, hymns written perhaps hardly more than a generation before the time when the Anointed Lord was actually born.

The term 'Lord' is applied to Jesus throughout St. Luke's Gospel with the deepest reverence and obviously as the expression of that reverence. The full height of this reverence may be suggested to us by certain passages in which the term 'Lord' occurs in citations from the Old Testament, where its reference is to Jehovah, though in the citations it seems to be applied to Jesus. Like the other Synoptists, Luke cites, for instance, from Isaiah the promise of a voice crying in the wilderness, 'Make ye ready the way of the Lord, make his paths straight' (iii. 4), and applies it to the coming of John the Baptist, whom he represents as preparing the way for Jesus' manifestation. As in the case of the other Evangelists, the inference lies close that by 'the Lord' here Luke means Jesus, whose coming he thus identifies with the advent of Jehovah, and whose person he seems to identify with Jehovah. On the other hand, in passages like i. 17, 76, although the language is similar, it seems more natural to understand the term 'Lord' as referring to God Himself, and to conceive the speaker to be thinking of the coming of Jehovah to redemption in Jesus, without necessary identification of the person of Jesus with Jehovah. The mere circumstance, however, that the reader is led to pause over such passages and to consider whether they may not intend by their 'Lord'—who is Jehovah—to identify the person of Jesus with Jehovah is significant. We should never lose sight of the outstanding fact that to men familiar with the Septuagint and the usage of 'Lord' as the personal name of the Deity there illustrated, the term 'Lord' was charged with associations of deity, so that a habit of speaking of Jesus as 'the Lord' by way of eminence, such as is illustrated by Luke and certainly was current from the beginning of the Christian proclamation (xix. 31), was apt to carry with it implications of deity which, if not rebuked or in some way guarded against, must be considered as receiving the sanction of Jesus Himself.

4. It was needful that the nature and origin of the lordship should be distinctly proclaimed. That the Saviour should possess and exercise power was not enough. He was not only a Lord, but an Anointed Lord; even as the high priest, in accusing Him to Pilate, described Him as 'saying that he himself was an anointed King.' In other words, from God came His authority, and from God came the endowments for the exercise of His government. Such was manifestly the signification of the anointing of a king in the Old Testament, and especially in the Psalms. The anointed of Jehovah reigned in Jehovah's name: his title was bound up with the obligation to represent visibly to the people in his own acts the righteous rule of the invisible King above. But the Divine consecration was also a fountain of Divine power. Jehovah did not leave His representative without the fitting gifts of grace for the arduous tasks of his office. And even so did the Apostles themselves understand the anointing which they recognized as implied in the name Christ, borne by Him to whom it pre-eminently

[1] E. L. Strong, *The Incarnation of God*, 90.

belonged. 'Thy holy servant Jesus whom thou didst anoint'—such is the language of the lofty prayer with which they greeted the release of St. Peter and St. John, contrasting Him thus with the other lords, the kings of the earth and the rulers, who had been gathered together against Him in Jerusalem. 'God anointed him,' St. Peter said, on the day on which he learned that the Gentiles had indeed a part in the gospel, speaking of the good tidings of peace sent through Jesus Christ to the sons of Israel—'God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power.'

Out of the little band of faithful Israelites who knew and owned their Lord and King a universal Church has grown, and through the Church a Christendom. Yet still in our dullness of heart we are always lapsing into forgetfulness that One who is both Saviour and anointed Lord is indeed in the midst of us, at all times the Author, the Pattern, and the Sustainer of all true and beneficent order in human society. If we give heed to His presence, we are apt either to think of Him as a Saviour who exercises no rule and demands no obedience; in other words, a Saviour ineffectual to save from sin; or else in our thoughts to strip His sovereignty of its graciousness, and bring back in His name a law without a gospel. The angel's message, interpreting the whole teaching of Christmas, meets all these diseases of the spirit. There is a true analogy between, on the one side, what the shepherds saw and heard that night in relation to the revelation through the ministry, the Passion, the Resurrection, and the Ascension, and, on the other hand, the whole Incarnation in relation to the future unveiling of our Lord Jesus Christ. In each case a period of partial darkness stands between an earlier and a later outburst of light. But in each case the light already given has been enough for the way to be trodden, and we know that the times and seasons are now, as always, in God's hand. The gospel proper, the gospel to the Apostles, will shine for us with fresher and more living power if we approach it through the prelusive and elementary gospel to the shepherds. The Apostles themselves will teach us how in their hands, in accordance with the Father's eternal purpose, the great joy for all the people became a great joy for all mankind.

Salvation.

Luke ii. 11.—'Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour.'

CHRISTIANITY, as the angel from heaven heralded it, as Jesus Himself proclaimed it about the villages of Galilee, as the first age of Græco-Roman civilization received it, was glad tidings—news which, like new wine, wrought a contagious intoxication of joy among the common people, because it announced to them salvation, deliverance from evil, and a present Kingdom of God on earth. And in what other or better phrases than these can you describe the conscious need of our time? What is the restless, hungry heart of modern nations crying after through those who best interpret its strange, half-inarticulate longing? What but the bringing in of a new and better social condition for the whole people, a new and Diviner order for society itself, in which men shall dwell together as comrades in helpful fellowship, serving each the need of all, so that wrong and want and wretchedness shall be banished from the land, and a golden age shall dawn of justice and peace, plenty and contentment. Again men are dreaming such dreams as shone before the souls of Hebrew prophets like Micah and Isaiah—dreams of a reconstituted state, of a regenerated society, of a kingdom of God on earth; and Christianity, which came into the world as the professed fulfilment of such Messianic dreams, with that announcement of a Kingdom of God upon its lips, is being openly challenged to fulfil them now.

It seems, therefore, as though the preacher who knows his age and his message ought to have something to say both pertinent and acceptable. But no one can fail to notice that the modern world attaches a different conception to this central word 'salvation' from that which has been traditional in the Church. What the Church has always placed in the forefront of her message has been the deliverance of the individual from sin, and from the consequences of his own sinning; it has exhorted men to seek to have their souls saved from guilt and condemnation and Divine wrath by the forgiveness of their sins; it has sought to produce saints and holy individuals by gathering them out of the world, and training

them into fitness for another and better world than this. And certain types of earnest Christianity have carried this so far as to sacrifice everything else to personal salvation, that is to say, to the securing of heaven for the individual believer when he dies.

Now with the revival of a keener instinct, which is a leading mark of our times, it has become the fashion to deride this as pure selfishness—selfishness in the guise of religion, a narrow, cowardly concern for one's private safety, as though 'salvation,' that great Biblical word, meant just safety; and by way of violent recoil from a form of piety so isolated and individualistic, the cry of the new democracy is all for the sacrifice of the individual to the community. It will have the individual find salvation, if at all, through the bettering of the community of which he forms a part, and through his own efforts to promote this commonweal. Its idea, therefore, is not saved souls, but a wholesome public life; to cure the ills of society by applying the principles of Christian ethics to the relation of man to man, of class to class, of labour to capital, of population to the soil; to readjust these social relationships on lines which will distribute more equally than hitherto the fruits of industry, and remedy those economic and insanitary conditions which cause preventable misery to the masses of the people. This is the aim and end of sensible thinkers of the new school, however confused, anarchic, or foolish may be the methods by which some would work out such ends as these. It is demanded, accordingly, that we modify or widen our conception of salvation. We must understand by it, we are told, salvation from physical ills, and not from spiritual only; salvation for the State, and not for the individual only; salvation that ends in a Kingdom of God on earth, and not in heaven only.

Here, then, are two theories of what Christianity and the Christian Church are intended to accomplish, and if they are not at hopeless variance, at all events they appeal to totally different states of mind, and set a good many excellent people among us by the ears. It is difficult for people to work together at all, or even to do justice to each other, when the one set takes for its watchword, 'Christian, save yourself from this untoward generation,' while the other understands Christ's words, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,' to mean that we are really saving ourselves when we are toiling to advance purity, fair dealing, and brotherhood as the dominant forces in national life.

There must be found room in the accepted Christianity of the future for both these ideals. It is probably going to be one of the achievements of the wider and better-balanced theology which one trusts is to come out of the present confusion, that it will frame some larger conception of Christ's purpose in coming to this world, a conception big enough to embrace and to harmonize these two rival theories—the personal religious theory, which puts it in the salvation of the soul from sin alone, and the ethical and social theory, which finds it in the redemption of the community from wrong and suffering. For the present what we have to do, if we would be wise and sane on this question, is to try to avoid one-sidedness and narrowness and to deal as fairly as we can by all the elements which combine, or may combine, in that great Divine word Salvation for mankind.

1. The salvation of the world means more than the justifying of the individual sinner. As Christ's Kingdom slowly grows and widens through the centuries—Christ's kingdom of all nations, and of all men—it is drawing into His service many a side rill of influence which goes to swell the central stream of His redemption, drawing into His service a thousand forces of knowledge, of culture, of law, of science, and human progress, which all contribute to renovate and refine society and to penetrate Christendom more profoundly with Christian thoughts. The end of Christ's saving work, as He announced it Himself, is to be a Kingdom—not souls or even churches, but a Kingdom of God; and it is that fuller, truer conception of His religion and of His salvation towards which Christ in His wise providence is leading us in our day. The problems which are raised by the social democracy are such as never would have been raised, probably, but for the unacknowledged and subtle spread in Europe of Christian ideas—for example, the equal worth of all men before God, and the fraternity of all men as sons of a common father. Out of ideas like these the new yeast has come which is fermenting in the world to-day, and they are problems, moreover,

which are not likely to find solution except through the application, confessed or unconfessed, of principles and ideas which the world owes to Jesus of Nazareth—for example, His golden rule, His spirit of neighbourly love, His idea of salvation for others through the sacrifice of self. The theology and the pulpit of our churches dare not hold themselves aloof from such applications of Christianity to common life, lest that should come to pass which of all calamities would be one of the worst—namely, that the genius or spirit of Christianity and the organized framework of the Christian church should, perchance, part company for good and take their separate roads.

2. And yet, while all that has to be said, the new social theory of salvation is apt to be as one-sided as the old, and a great deal more shallow. For the defect of its quality is this—that it tends to cleanse the outside of the cup and platter while the inside is left full of all uncleanness. It is, when you think of it, comparatively poor work to furbish up the exterior, merely, of human life, to wash a man, and educate his children, and rebuild his house, and guarantee him a fair wage, and find him music, and an art gallery, and a pension after sixty, if, after all, you have left unclosed that frightful cleft which has severed the man in his deepest soul from the Will that rules this universe; that cleavage which has made him a slave to his own unbridled animal desires, and a child of the devil; that cleavage which in its effects, beginning in the cleavage of the soul from God, goes down to the base of spiritual being. When all is said and done, therefore, it remains true that the profoundest need of all our needs is reunion to God, the renewal of a healthy relationship with Him who is the Eternal Source and Author of all our being—the Father Almighty of our spirits. And the portion of Christ's work as Saviour of mankind, in which all the rest must have its root, and apart from which the rest is but a whitewashing of sepulchres, is the reconciliation of human hearts to the holy and perfect will of God which He accomplished by His sacrifice for sin.

(1) As Christ said,—and the words deserve to be pondered by grave and serious thinkers of our time—one thing is needful. And it is this supreme and absolute necessity for a radical salvation of the individual soul from sin which justifies the stress—not the exclusive stress, but the superior stress—laid by the old evangelism on its peculiar lessons of personal repentance and faith and regeneration to emancipate burdened souls from the guilt of the past and from the love and tyranny of sin in the present. This is past question Christ's characteristic office among men, His primal, unique service to our race. Whatever else, or more, may flow from Christianity for the uplifting and deliverance of the peoples will have to follow in the wake of that—can never take the place of it. Hence the Church will commit a graver error than ever if she lets the popular cry for social reform draw her aside from her proper task. The fashion, almost the craze, of the hour runs strongly in the direction of social philanthropy, with or without religion. For alongside the grim socialism of the democracy there is a dainty, modish variety of the article with which well-to-do society amuses itself. On all sides, therefore, the Church and the pulpit are importuned or challenged to fall into the stream and work with the current. They should not stand aloof. It would be hazardous if they did. The movement for elevating and gladdening the lives of the poor is an outgrowth of the Christian spirit, but it will end in comparative failure if the Church of Christ permits it to be severed from the gospel of Christian redemption. The Church must therefore protest that the problem of personal guilt and sin is the first and the worst and the nearest of all problems for each man of us to solve, that which it most concerns us to get settled; and that with this problem no one deals, and no one can deal, save the Divine Saviour who was crucified on Calvary. Keep the one foot of the compasses pivoted here at home in the conscience and the will, in the religious relations of the individual man redeemed for God, and then you may sweep with the other limb as wide a circle as you please —the wider the better—take in all human affairs if you can, annex humanity itself, and make mankind one realm over which the Lord Jesus shall prevail.

(2) There is another point suggested by the text, at which the modern form of the cry for good news and a 'better time coming,' a day of salvation for the whole people, needs to be supplemented by the old gospel. Salvation as under-

stood by the new democracy is not only weak from its want of a pivot or centre for its circle within the personal life of the individual, but it is weak also from the want of a personal Divine Saviour to be its powerful chief and leader. The message of the Socialist is to work out your own salvation without knowing that it is God which worketh in you. Now that may answer for a secular reform, but for nothing deeper. It is quite likely that society contains within itself forces adequate to reconstitute itself on better lines, to equalize to a larger extent the material fruits of industry, and to secure to the majority the conditions of a healthier and fuller and more human existence. To readjust in this fashion the mere framework of our social and political state is a task which calls for no special Divine assistance; but if in doing this you leave each citizen as selfish, grasping, fraudulent, passionate as he was before, with the deepest need of his spirit unsatisfied, his will unregenerated, his nature unrenewed, is it so certain that you will have accomplished a great deal after all? If you set up your Kingdom of God on earth, or obtain the secular millennium, will that content you ? What if St. Paul was not so far wrong when he said, 'the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking'—does not essentially consist in any ascetic abstinence from bodily indulgence, no, nor yet in any wider distribution of the good things of this life; that it is not to be reached through improving men's environment or adding to their comforts; but its essence is 'righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit'—the rectification, in other words, of man's moral attitude to God and to his fellows, with the restoration in the secret heart of each of us of the indwelling God as the perennial source of a Divine content and a sacred likeness ?

But for this deeper and nobler regeneration of the individual life the forces are not to be found within human nature. That is the second witness the Church must bear. It is safe to predict that the new democracy will be found as impotent as the old society, built on wealth and poverty, has been. Privilege you can abolish if you choose, the distribution of wealth you may alter if you choose, but you cannot change the elemental basis of moral and spiritual life where lie the forces which make men themselves bad or good, happy or miserable. To do that you want a force mightier than humanity—the force of God, imported from without and from above.

¶ The social reformer, who proposes to put everything right by a redistribution of property, must be a very naïve sort of person. So is the educationist, who thinks that the social problem, the art of living together, will be solved by a better brain-drill. When you have got everybody well housed, well clothed, well fed, and well equipped mentally, what have you done ? The biggest scoundrels abroad to-day are people who have got all this. You may endow a man with all the powers that modern civilization, its wealth, its culture, can offer, and you have absolutely no guarantee that he will not use them as weapons with which to arm his wickedness. Social reform of this sort is beginning from the wrong end. It is to build without having prepared your materials. It is as if you should use clay before making it into bricks; timber that has never been seasoned. That is why all the Socialisms of yesterday and to-day have failed and will fail. Nothing can be done with men communally until they have been effectively dealt with individually. It is when men's hearts have been set to the right tune; when they have been brought into a right relation with life's highest and holiest, and have sworn allegiance to that; when they have learned religion's secret of faith and love—it is only out of such materials that you can build an enduring, a happy world. Napoleon even, when he came to rule France, had found that out. Said he to Roederer: 'How shall we get morality ? There is only one way—it is to re-establish religion.' [1]

To empty our teaching of the miracle of the Incarnation, or of the resurrection and elevation of the Incarnate to a position of spiritual efficiency at the centre of humanity as the Lord of the moral universe, would be to cut the vital nerve of our gospel. There can be then no good tidings that shall bring great joy to all people, or to any people, unless He who was born in the city of David was 'a Saviour, Christ the Lord'; and the Church must assert that, and prove it out of her own experience. For the Christian experience of regenerate men is a fact inexplicable apart from Jesus Christ. And Christ is a fact inexplicable apart from His Divine origin, mission,

[1] J. Brierley, *Faith's Certainties*, 163.

nature. Here is the secret of hope: the advent of a Divine helper pledges on our behalf Divine help. It all lies there. Not man alone apart from God, but man informed and reanimated by God in man—God with us—can be bidden with hope of success to work out his own salvation. Of one thing we may rest assured—no gospel of the age can ring with a note of confidence or triumph that does not proclaim a heaven-sent Saviour.

This baby's Face is as the sun
  Upon the dimness of our way!
This child's Arm ours to lean upon
  When mortal strength and hope decay.

Our path, erewhile so desolate,
  His dear beatitudes adorn;
Earth is a heavenward-opening gate,
  Since unto us this Child is born.

Born unto us, who vainly seek
  The fair ideal of our dreams
Among its mockeries, blurred and weak:
  He crowns the manhood He redeems.

To us, who trust that men will grow
  Grander than thought or guess of ours,
When this pure Life through theirs shall flow,
  This Health divine stir all their powers.[1]

The Sign.

Luke ii. 12.—'This is the sign unto you: Ye shall find a babe' (RV).

THERE are in the Revised Version two very slight changes in this sentence, which make a wonderful difference in the sense, greatly increasing the suggestiveness of words already full of suggestion. One chief fault in the old Version is the want of precision in the use of the articles, and there is no more striking illustration of it than the one before us. The former translation was, 'This shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes,' whereas it should be, 'This shall be the sign unto you; Ye shall find a babe.' Let us with some care note the difference. 'This shall be a sign' suggests the idea that it was one out of many; whereas, when you read 'This shall be the sign,' it singles it out from all other circumstances, summons us, as it were, to dwell on it, to think over it, to attach the very greatest importance to it. Now look at the other article and see how much is gained by the opposite change from the definite to the indefinite. If it had been 'ye shall find the babe,' there is nothing more suggested than the pointing out what babe among all other babes then in Bethlehem is referred to. But read with the indefinite article and see the new meaning and power of the words. The angel had just announced to them 'a Saviour, Christ the Lord.' And now, how are they to recognize this wonderful Saviour, this Christ so long expected, this Lord to whom their homage and adoration are due—what is to be the sign? 'This shall be the sign unto you; Ye shall find—a babe'! In the one case the idea suggested is the very ordinary one, 'you shall find the babe you are looking for in such and such a condition'; in the other case the idea conveyed is the most extraordinary and suggestive one, 'Ye shall find the Saviour you are looking for, Christ the Lord, in the form of a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger.'

It is to be frankly acknowledged that the first impression made on our minds is a sense of incongruity; as if the humiliation—the cynic would say degradation—were too great to be credible. But on calmer and deeper thought it will become more and more apparent that if the Word is to be made flesh so as to dwell among us, it must be through the gate of helpless infancy that He enters, and that if He is to be the Friend of man, reaching down to the poorest and lowliest, it must be through the strait and narrow gate of poverty that He comes into the world to bless it. In fact the more we really think on the subject, the more we shall be convinced that to the thoughtful mind this was indeed the very sign: 'A babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger.'

The Christ of God we sing,
  The Babe of Bethlehem!
And on His infant head we place
  The royal diadem.
The crown of thorns is His,
  That child of poverty,

[1] *Sunday Afternoon Verses*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, 154.

Who on this earth of ours can find
No place His head to lay.
The crown of heaven is His,
And angels own Him there.
The crown of earth shall yet be His,
And we that crown shall share.[1]

What are the thoughts and feelings that crowd upon us as we stand on this great day beside the manger of the humble village 'in the land of Judah,' and see there a Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes? To the shepherds that sight was a sign that the message of the angel and the song of the heavenly host were true. Of what truth or truths of God's showing is it still a sign to us?

1. The first and simplest answer is to say, It is a sign of the love of our Father which is in heaven. The Babe lying there, helpless, dependent, utterly unknown, is God's highest gift to man. Gifts, we know, are symbols of love. Every gift that has been given or will yet be given this day is a symbol and a vehicle of human affection. It links hearts. It reveals character. The gifts that we give to each other are a type of the gifts that God gives to us all. He who lies in that cradle has Himself taught us to reason: 'If ye being evil'—ye fathers and mothers, with all your faults and unwisdom and half knowledge and manifold lack of sympathy and deplorable inconsistencies of conduct—'if ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him.'

To-day that 'how much more' is at its highest. The 'good things' given by the Heavenly Father are the one good thing of all. 'Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.' The great gift which is the express image of the Father's love, the gift which is given to all alike, aye, even to those who ask it not and know it not, lies there, if the Creed which we profess be true, 'wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger.'

'And this is the sign unto you.' That sight, we say, is a sign of God's love, His tender love towards mankind. Let no other thought that we link with Christmas Day—nothing of earth, however delightful, nothing even of heaven, however august—obscure for us this one great fact which to-day flashes forth from the brightness of His glory: God loved us, and therefore gave us Jesus as the Christ. God so loved the world that he gave it His only begotten son.

¶ John iii. 16 says far more than 'God so loved the world that he came to save it.' I heard once of an old woman who grasped its meaning with an insight which many learned commentators have not had. She said, when this passage had been read to her, 'Ah that was love indeed! I can think of myself as going to save someone, but I can't imagine how I could give my only son to die for him.' It tells us that God sacrificed all that was dear to Him, all that He has and is, for our sake. . . . For the Father's whole capacity for love, if we may so speak, is satisfied in His Son, or Word, who is God's own self expressed. Hence, when God gives Him for us, His whole infinite love is in action for us—He has given Himself. He could not give more, for there is no more to give. This act of giving is the Father's supreme act of *self-sacrifice*.

2. The Babe lying in the manger is a sign of God's love. It is a sign also of that humility which is part of the Divine character and well-nigh the noblest part of man's heritage. You cannot stand there and be proud. You cannot look on that Child and think of your own goodness or strength or past successes or future ambitions. The 'dearest idol' you 'have known' crumbles away and falls from its pedestal before you leave that Presence-chamber. Distinction, ascendancy, pride of birth, pride of beauty, pride of intellect, pride of conquest—where are they in that Infant Presence? They are in part crushed, in part redeemed and transfigured. Whatever of earth and of self clung to them is purged and done away. What remains after that testing is reclaimed for the new Kingdom. And so long as that manger asserts and makes good its claim to the homage of human hearts at their best and purest, so long will survive a deep-seated faith that, in spite of all appearances, it is 'more blessed to give than to receive'; better to be the victim than the doer of wrong; better to lose life than to save it; better to minister than to be ministered to; better to sit down from the first in the lowest room; better to feel from the heart, as each rival passes by and

[1] Horatius Bonar.

[1] E. L. Strong, *The Incarnation of God*, 30.

eclipses self, 'He must increase, but I must decrease.'

3. Again, the sight of the Babe lying in the manger is a sign of the origin and the progress of good. It has been said, in memorable words, 'God loves to build upon nothing.' When He wishes to lift our minds to the level of His greatness, He points us not so much to the starry heavens, or to the strong foundations of the earth, or to the wonderful laws, slowly spelt out by His most gifted servants, by which He made and sustains the worlds, not this—but He takes a little Child, and sets Him in the midst, and bids us mark what that Child will do for the healing of the nations and the lifting up of the race. That Child will obey His earthly parents, and be busy early with His Heavenly Father's work, and live quiet and undiscovered in His village home, and be baptized by His own servant, and resist temptation through Divine strength, and then slowly teach and make followers, and be misunderstood by them and deserted and denied and betrayed. He will arouse hatred by His goodness, and ridicule by His brotherly-kindness. His best works of love will be assigned to the spirit of evil. The chiefs of the established religions will be His bitterest foes. They will brand Him as a heretic and a traitor, and hound on the people to demand His blood. He will suffer the Saviour's agony and die the felon's death.

And then, when all this has passed, the change will set in. He will 'see of the travail of his soul.' The work of the Child who lay in the manger will be seen to have had in it a 'power from on high.' The Cross will complete what the Manger began. Before the innocence and the holiness which they symbolize and transmit, one after another of the giant evils of earth will totter—idolatry, and slavery, and cruelty, and impurity. Slowly indeed will these strongholds fall, but in each case it will be His Name, and the passionate devotion which that Name inspires—it will be that Name, strong in its weakness and its sufferings, through which the new life of mankind will be born.

And as it is with the Master, so, in part at least, it will be with His servants and with His cause. Let all who are in any way reformers, all who would do some good before they die, in their family, their parish, their church, their country—all who give their hearts to mission work, and say sometimes in their haste, as they look on the vast deserts yet to be reclaimed, 'How long, O Lord, how long?'—let all such 'go even unto Bethlehem,' and stand with shaded eyes before the brightness which streams from that Infant brow. Each cause of good to which they have plighted their troth must pass through that stage of 'great humility.' Not when it is known furthest and praised most, and backed by the patronage of the kingdoms of the world, but when it lies in the manger, obscure and unbefriended, watched by the Father which seeth in secret, and evoking the adoration of angels, is the cause of the reformer and the philanthropist most sure of that victory which is not his, or her's, but God's.

4. Once more, that Child lying in the manger is a sign of the brotherhood of all mankind. We see there not that which makes us different from each other, but that which makes us one. As we stand, we think not of rank, or class, or wealth, or learning, or bodily strength, or anything which the world calls 'advantages,' but of human nature, of the family, of kindred blood, of the mysteries of common life and common death and common duties, in a word, of brotherhood. If we stood oftener in thought beside that cradle, if the best spirit of Christmas were habitually upon us, if it were really a vital part of our creed to say, as part of the meaning of the Incarnation, 'one is our Master, even Christ, and all we are brethren,' would not the face of society be changed; nay, would it not long since have been changed?

For instance, would not feudalism have bequeathed us not only, as it has done, a noble ideal, that birth and wealth have their obligations, but also incomparably purer traditions of practice and of service? Would not our laws long since have been framed and administered with far more regard to the poor, and the ignorant, and the weak? Above all, would not the Church, the oldest and most gracious institution in the land, have been long since, and never more than now, the darling of the whole nation, the symbol of justice and brotherly sympathies, the very bond of peace and of all morality, the recognized Tribune of the Commons, 'the shadow of a great rock in a weary land'?

So we say to ourselves, not in heated fancy or high-wrought sentiment, but in prayer and penitence and humble regret, as we stand by the lowly cradle of Him who is our faith. From there He still speaks to us, asks us why we have not made more of the past, bids us still buy up the time. Thank God, there is still time for mankind to be brotherly, to bear one another's burdens, to learn mutual duties, to stamp socialism with the sign of the Cross, to say to the cities of England, and even to the most degraded and deluded of her citizens, as we point on Christmas Day to their Saviour and ours lying in the manger, 'Behold your God!'

A Babe.

Luke ii. 12.—'Ye shall find a babe.'

By coming Himself a little child, our Lord for ever glorified and sanctified childhood. Christmas is, *par excellence,* the children's festival. It is the day when the children, however far they may be scattered during the year, meet again around the family hearth, and sit down again around the family table. When we begin to analyse our Christmas joy, it is amazing how largely it gathers round the children. And it is right that Christmas should be the children's festival, for it is the anniversary of the discovery of the little child. Before Christ came child life was held of little account; infanticide was common; little children were flung out as rubbish and left to die. But Jesus became a little child, and by so doing revealed the preciousness and worth and winsome beauty of childhood. He put the crown upon the child's head. What care is taken of him to-day. And what love is lavished upon him. When Christmas morning dawns, the child wakes to find himself surrounded with presents. He hung his stocking up overnight, and, sure enough, in the morning it is filled with good things. Santa Claus, we say in our make-believe way, visited his bedroom overnight, and brought him the gifts. But many of our children know better. They have begun to realize that father and mother are the real Santa Claus, and that it is they who have brought the presents. But another figure is standing behind father and mother—it is Jesus Christ. He is the true Santa Claus. He, and not St. Nicholas, is the 'good fairy' to whom the children owe all their Christmas joy and gladness. It is well, therefore, that Christmas Day should be made a happy day for the children. It is well that all that is brightest and most gay should be identified with the birthday of Jesus, for it was the coming of Jesus that exalted the child. Our children owe their happy homes, their parents' love, their beautiful presents, all to the fact that when the shepherds went to Bethlehem long ago they found a Babe.

1. 'Ye shall find a babe,' said the angel, and at that the exultation the shepherds had felt at the announcement of Messiah's birth gave way to disappointment. A Babe? This was not the Saviour of their dreams; they had expected a conquering prince, and instead of that they were told that if they went to Bethlehem they would find a baby. If these shepherds had been less simple and childlike they would have rejected the angelic message on the spot. They would have said: 'A babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger can never be our long-promised Messiah.' Many did reject Christ because of the unexpected manner of His coming.

The sages frowned, their beards they shook,
For pride their heart beguiled;
They said, each looking on his book,
We want no child.

The soldiers rose in noisy sport,
Disdainfully they smiled,
And said, 'Can babes the shield support?
We want no child.'

A little child for Deliverer. It looked absurd. So it was, if Messiah's business was to break the nations in pieces like a potter's vessel. But there was a far better and more effectual way of reforming and saving the world than by smashing up the Roman Empire, and that was by changing men's hearts. And when it comes to changing hearts the 'mailed fist' is not half so effective as the gentle touch of a little child. And because God's thoughts were not the Jews' thoughts, because His purpose for the world was not that of reform by constraint, but that of salvation by gentleness and love, He sent His Son into the world as a little child, and this was the sign given to the shepherds—Ye shall find a Babe!

¶ I visited a home not long ago where there is a crippled invalid boy. My host began enquiring about my children, and when I said I had a boy and girl, he remarked, 'God has not given us a little girl.' 'No dear,' replied his wife from the other end of the table, 'but He has given us our little invalid boy.' And who shall tell how much of the affectionate considerateness and love of that home is due to that helpless child? But no child has ever touched and moved and changed human hearts as Jesus has. The story of the 'Babe of Bethlehem' is a story of stooping, sacrificial love. And the thought of the love revealed in the little child makes hard hearts soft, miserly hearts generous, impure hearts clean, selfish hearts loving. The 'Little Child' leads us. We look at Him and are led out into holier and purer lives.[1]

O Child, Thy silence speaks, and bids us not refuse
To bear what flesh would shun, to spurn what flesh would choose,
Fill us with holy love, heal Thou our earthly pride,
Be born within our heart, and ever there abide.

2. 'Ye shall find a babe'; and ever since there has been a Christian religion at all, the little child has been the type and symbol of the Kingdom. Christmas comes round with its annual reminder that for our sakes Jesus became a child. And as we look at Him lying in the manger we are reminded that we, too, must become as little children if we would enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Christmas appeals to us to cultivate for ourselves the beautiful and gracious child-spirit. And what exactly is the child-spirit? Perhaps the answer that Robert Louis Stevenson gives in his Christmas sermon will suffice for our present purpose. 'The kingdom of heaven,' he says, 'is of the childlike, of those who are easy to please, who love and give pleasure.' Those are the childlike, according to Stevenson, who are easy to please and who love and give pleasure. And Christmas appeals to us to cultivate that spirit. It not only appeals to us to cultivate it, it actually begets that spirit within us. We all of us have more or less of Scrooge in our make-up. But Christmas melts and thaws him. We open our hearts; we think of absent friends; we remember the poor and needy at our doors; we send cards to this one, and a present to that other—all with the object of making Christmas the merrier for them. We love to give pleasure, and as we allow this Christmas spirit to take possession of us, we find the truth of the old word, that it is more blessed to give than to receive. It is not the selfish, but the sacrificial, Christmas that is the happy one.

¶ Bismarck is reported to have said that the cigar he enjoyed most in all his life was a cigar he never smoked. It was after one of the big battles of the Franco-German war. It had been a grim struggle, but at last the issue had been decided and victory won. And Bismarck—the tension over—took out a cigar, the last he had, happy in the thought of a smoke. But just as he was about to apply the match to it, he saw a wounded soldier looking at his cigar with longing eyes. Bismarck understood the appeal. He lit the cigar and gave it to the wounded soldier, and saw him in the enjoyment of his smoke almost forget the pain of his wound. 'It was the best cigar I ever had,' said the Iron Chancellor. We all catch a little of that spirit at Christmas. We think of others. We love to give pleasure, and in giving pleasure to others we ourselves drink of the deep springs of joy.[1]

[1] J. D. Jones, in *The Messenger*, Dec. 24, 1909, p. 826.

Swaddling Clothes.

Luke ii. 12.—'Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes.'

SWADDLING clothes have gone out of fashion in our Western civilization. The very term has become obsolete, and needs explanation. The clothes consisted of long enswathing bandages, much like those which fasten the Indian's papoose to its board. Such bandages forbid all freedom of movement to the limbs and sometimes dangerously constrict the vital organs. So the Virgin-mother clothed her baby; for it was the fashion of her day and people—the best she knew.

1. The swaddling bands seem to stand for all the confining limitations that hedged in on every side the human life of Jesus. Did you ever pause to think how narrow, how meagre, how barren and confined, was that life when measured by any of our modern standards?

[1] J. D. Jones, in *The Messenger*, Dec. 24, 1909, p. 827.

(1) This Man set deliberately before Himself a world-wide mission. And yet He was born and brought up in a mountain village, more crude in its manners, more contracted in its horizons and narrow in its interests, than the remotest hamlet of our country; as crude and narrow as only an Oriental village can be. It became a proverb even in that dull day and desolate country, 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' Our enterprising young men from the country districts feel that if they are going to do anything or be anything worth while, they must get out of the confining monotonous life of their native village into the wider, freer, more interesting life of the great world. Jesus stayed steadfastly in Nazareth for thirty years, until the signal for beginning His career sounded. For if His life there were shut in outwardly on every side, it was open inwardly and upwardly. And even in Nazareth God was God and men were men. And so He could and did learn from God and men even there. How short was that ministry. We cannot get time in a long life to finish any of our feeble designs, if we have any, and so we leave them unfinished. And yet He wrought in those three years what lives for ever, and said at their close, 'It is finished.'

(2) There might seem to be prospect of emancipation from the limitations of Nazareth when at the age of twelve He passed the confines of the lonely village, and went with the multitude that kept holy day up to the city of His father David. His place—so He told those who had sought Him sorrowing—was there at His Father's house. And truly there were great men sitting there in the Temple cloisters, whose wise words have come down to us in the dark, square, backward-written characters of many a Hebrew volume of traditions. What a longed-for opportunity it must have been to the Holy Child, full of wisdom and the grace of God, to escape from the circumscribed wisdom of the village elders, and listen at Jerusalem to those who sat in Moses' seat. But, alas, He found rigid narrowness, fatal clinging to the letter, and the fear to teach what was right and true and confessedly Divine except it could be justified by some commentator upon a commentator. We are accustomed to speak of the books of casuistry taught in Roman Catholic seminaries as cramping and enfeebling to the mind; and so they are. But they are vigour and liberty itself compared with the traditions of these Hebrew elders.

2. What does all this teach us? What does the sign of the swaddling bands mean to you and me?

(1) There is a philosophy, much prevalent in these days, which declares practically that things make men; that every human being is simply and wholly the product of his heredity plus his environment. Even the greatest of the sons of men, it affirms, can be so accounted for. Given such and such inheritances, such and such possessions, such and such surroundings, you will inevitably have such a man. It is a dreadfully materialistic and depressing philosophy. And yet it often seems most plausible, even in the case of some of our greatest and noblest. That philosophy has tried its hand, also, on the Supreme Man. Given the ecstatic expectations of the age and the ages behind it, given the religious fervours and genius of the people Israel, Jesus Christ is their natural product. But the slightest analysis of the life, the character, and the work of Jesus Christ, and the world in which He grew and lived, successfully refutes such a philosophy. For Jesus' world, Jesus' environment, serve simply as a foil which brings out in startling contrast the unique originality of all that He was and said and did. He can be explained only as the Word made Flesh. On the very lowest grounds He can be accounted for only as a God-possessed man with a God-inspired message. And it is that Truth and Personality which make Him for ever the 'power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.' So is Christ Himself the Christian's sufficient answer to all the scepticism of the age.

(2) But, second, there is a lesson for ourselves in this sign of the swaddling bands. What is true of Jesus in a unique and supreme degree may be true of every one of us in his measure. We, too, through Jesus' grace and power, may declare our independence of things and circumstances. We too, through Him, may be conquerors over our environment, victors over our world. We, too, can make our very limitations helps rather than hindrances to our mission and our tasks. We can be what we were meant to be, and do what we were intended to do, though the whole world seem to be set against us.

¶ When Moses was called to his great task, he

pleaded as excuse his lack of equipment. And God asked him, 'What is that in thine hand'? (It was only a shepherd's crook). 'Take that, for with that thou shalt do wonders.' So God says to you and to me, 'Take what thou hast of means, of opportunity, of ability, and be and do what thou canst.' And with Him we can do and be all that He means us to do and be. For it is men that count, and not things, in God's warfare.

This I beheld, or dreamed it in a dream:
There spread a cloud of dust along the plain,
And underneath the cloud, or in it, raged
A furious battle, and men yelled and swords
Shocked upon shields. A prince's banner
Wavered, then staggered backwards, hemmed by foes.
A craven hung along the battle's edge
And thought, 'Had I a sword of keener steel,
That blue blade that the king's son beareth—
But this,—blunt thing.' He snapped and flung it from his hand,
And lowering crept away and left the field.
Then came the king's son, wounded, sore-bested
And weaponless, and saw the broken sword
Hilt-buried in the dry and trodden sand,
And ran and snatched it, and with battle-shout
Lifted afresh, he hewed his enemy down
And saved a great cause that heroic day.

The Heavenly Host.

Luke ii. 13.—'And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host.'

A MULTITUDE of the heavenly host. For what does that stand? Surely for more than is suggested by any crowd of angels as art has represented them. There is something vast and majestic about the word. The writer of Genesis speaks of the heavens and the earth and all the hosts of them, and we may remember that one of the Old Testament titles of God is 'the Lord of Hosts.' The ancients seem to have been deeply impressed by the multitudinousness of the works and ministries of God. The multitude of the hosts of the earth includes all living things down to the lowest and the weakest; the multitude of the heavenly hosts includes all the higher unseen ministers of life, and beings that reach upward to the eternal throne. So there seems to be expressed for us in this celestial pæan the interest of the eternal world in the things of time.

1. There is sounded here for the first time that note of harmony between the seen and the unseen world which is expressed again and again in the life and teaching of the Lord. In two accounts of the Temptation we are told the angels came and 'ministered' unto Him. In His own teaching, 'there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth,' and the angels of the children 'do always behold the face of the Father.' His own life runs even to the tragic hour of Calvary with the assurance that in it God is well pleased. The whole work and ministry of redemption wakes glad music in the heavenly places. The saving of a soul upon the earth means melody in heaven, the laying down of a life here in self-forgetting service makes unseen hosts sing.

¶ That the hosts of the unseen world were interested in the affairs of earth was not a new thought. To the Greek mind the gods sat like the audience in some monstrous amphitheatre watching the sport, anon interfering in it, helping or hindering. But their interest was often capricious, meaningless, whimsical, selfish. It is expressed in such ideas as that those whom the gods loved died young, that too good fortune provoked their jealousy. Shakespeare's King Lear has concentrated a good deal of the bitterness of the older thought in the sentence,

As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods,
They kill us for their sport.

At the best, as we find it in the great Greek tragedians, an exact and awful justice, merciless and certain in its strokes, is all that man can hope from the unseen. There was nothing before Christ came like this clear harmony of earth and heaven, the radiant assurance which allowed Faber to sing,

There is no place where earth's sorrows
Are more felt than up in heaven;
There is no place where earth's failings
Have such kindly judgment given.

or which inspired Tennyson's fine prayer,

Be near us when we climb or fall:
Ye watch like God, the rolling hours

With larger other eyes than ours,
To make allowance for us all.[1]

2. On earth few cared for the Lord Jesus. The innkeeper could not find room for Him. Herod wished to kill Him. The mass of mankind thought nothing of Him. But the multitude of the heavenly host were praising God, and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.' The angels thought more of God's mercy to man than man thought of it himself. They were unselfish in their praise, for the good will was not to angels, but to men, and the peace was not for heaven, but for earth. But our peace filled their hearts with joy. The peace was for us, but the thought of it gladdened them. Is it not strange that believing hearts are not more gladdened when the sacred gift is bestowed on themselves? Shall angels who have no share in the blessing praise God, and shall we, for whose life all has been done, shall we be silent? If they are filled with thanksgiving while they merely look on and see what God has done for us, shall not we, for whom He has done it, at all events equal them in praise? Therefore with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious Name.

God gave this Gift to me—
Mine own to be!
Lo, all my days
Henceforward shall be spent in living praise;
My life—my lips for ever shall proclaim
His holy name.
He gave this Gift to me—
Mine own to be;
And I, with faith no longer cold and dim,
Lift up mine eyes to look on Him
Before whom angels fall
And see in Him my All in all.[2]

The Gloria in Excelsis.

Luke ii. 14:—'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased.' (RV).

This famous hymn is contained within the compass of a single verse. There are traces of its having been used in the services of the Christian Church from very early times. You find it, for instance, as the last of a series of canticles which was appended sometimes to the Psalter in early Christian manuscripts, and intended clearly for the liturgical use of the Church. And the *Codex Alexandrinus* in the British Musuem, the splendid fifth or sixth century manuscript of the Greek Bible, preserves this hymn, Gloria in Excelsis, as the last of fourteen canticles which follow the Psalter, and it is given the title of 'Morning Hymn.' In the Western Church its Latin form was adopted in the regular services of the Church; and in the Roman Church now this Angels' Hymn is recited at the opening of the Mass. In the Church of England in the first Prayer-book of Edward VI., composed in 1549, this hymn was placed at the opening part of the Communion Office, immediately after the first Collect, the Introit and the Short Kyrie. But in the second Prayer-book of Edward VI., when the insertion of the Commandments had been made and other changes had led to the alteration of the arrangement of the service, the Doxology commencing with the Angels' Hymn, was removed to the very close of the Communion Service immediately before the Blessing. Whether or not this was liturgically correct has, of course, often been strongly disputed; but which of us cannot testify to the moving and pathetic influence of this short, simple eucharistic offering of praise expanded from the Angels' Song and expressing the sense of humble thanksgiving on the part of worshippers after making their communion? In the first sentence of that Doxology you find our hymn contained, and in the following words: 'Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.'

Notice in passing that in this Prayer-book version there are three small points of difference. First of all, the words 'on high,' namely *in excelsis*—we find that expression instead of what we find in our Bibles—'Glory to God in the highest.' Now the Vulgate, the Latin version of the Bible, has *in altissimis*, 'in the highest.' This shows that the version of the hymn which is contained in the Doxology of the Communion Office was made independently of, and probably earlier than, the translation of the Latin Bible by Jerome.

The second point is that the rendering 'in

[1] W. Charter Piggott, *The Imperishable Word*, 37.
[2] E. H. Divall, *A Believer's Rest*, 3.

earth' which is found in the Prayer-book for the Latin *in terra* is not quite so accurate as that which we find in our English Bibles—'on earth.'

The last point to notice is that in the words 'Glory be to God on high' the little verb 'be' has been introduced. We are accustomed to say, 'Glory to God in the highest.' The Prayer-book version, 'Glory be to God on high,' turns the sentence into a wish or prayer. In the original Greek there is no verb at all. The language is that simply of ascription or exclamation. But in the Communion Office it becomes quite suitably a prayer of eucharistic praise.

The Angels' Hymn is known to us as the Gloria in Excelsis. Its brief contents are compressed into a single verse. But, brief though they are, their beauty and simplicity have made on every Christian heart an indescribably deep impression. The Christmas hymn of the angels proclaims the glory of God in the heavenly place and the peace that He has brought among men on earth below. Glory to God, peace among men—such, we are intended to infer, is the theme of praise and thanksgiving in the heavenly host, because of Him who is born in the City of David, Saviour, Messiah and Lord.

Now what precisely the sentences are in grammatical form has been much disputed. Are they predictions? There shall be glory, there shall be peace. Or are they prayers? May there be glory in heaven, may there be peace on earth! Or are they in the nature of triumphant affirmations? Now indeed there is glory in heaven; now indeed there is peace on earth. The sentences partake of the nature of proclamation, or ascription, almost of exclamation. The attempt, then, to limit their significance by introducing 'there shall be,' or 'there may be,' or 'there is,' inevitably detracts from the grandeur and simplicity of the angels' utterance. In the Greek, as we said, there is no verb, and the full meaning seems to partake of all three shades of thought, and blends them into one joyous cry of triumph.

1. The ascription of glory to God by created beings is a form of praise which may defy logical definition, but it expresses the uttermost of human conception of eucharistic praise. The best illustration to be found is the song of praise of the four and twenty elders in the Book of Revelation: 'Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honour and the power: for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were, and were created.' And of the many angels in Rev. v.: 'Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honour, and glory, and blessing.'

The words 'in the highest' are less correctly reproduced by *in excelsis,* 'in the high places,' than by *in altissimis,* which we find in the Vulgate. There is doubtless an allusion here to the prevalent Jewish conception of a succession of seven heavens, one above the other, in the highest of which are the actual throne and dwelling-place of the Almighty God, Most High. And you will compare this expression with the words in Deut. x. 14: 'Unto the Lord thy God belongeth the heaven, and the heaven of heavens.' You will remember what was the cry of the people to our Lord as He passed in triumphal procession into Jerusalem: 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.' And we cannot forbear to connect this with the words of St. Paul in the twelfth chapter of his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, 'I know a man in Christ . . . caught up even to the third heaven.'

2. It is not out of place to notice the difficulty which arises from a very early variation of reading which is contained in the last verse of the hymn in the second clause. The evidence of the ancient authorities upon which we rely for the Greek text of the Gospels is divided here to a quite remarkable degree; so strongly supported are both readings which we find by early testimony of manuscript versions and Fathers that the variation of the text must date from extremely early time. Probably scarcely 100 years had elapsed from the time at which St. Luke composed his Gospel, when the manuscripts of the Gospel began to differ among themselves. The difference of reading is only the difference of a single letter, consisting in the presence, or in the omission, of the letter 's' at the end of the word that closes the verse. According to one reading the hymn ended with the Greek word for 'goodwill' *in the nominative,* without the final 's'; according to the other reading, the word which ended the hymn was *in*

the possessive, 'of goodwill,' with the 's' concluding it. Now, while numerous authorities can be quoted for both readings, there is very little doubt that the preponderance of the best manuscripts is in favour of the reading with which in England we are less familiar, but with which the readers of the Latin Bible have been acquainted from the earliest days, and with which, therefore, every Roman Catholic especially must be well acquainted when he hears this angels' song recited in the Canon of the Mass. It is this reading, the less familiar one, which we find, for instance, in Wyclif's Bible—'Glory be in the highest things to God, and on earth peace to men of goodwill.'

(1) First of all, let us take the language of the hymn as it is rendered in the Authorized Version. Its familiar strain is as follows: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.' Or quite literally, 'Glory to God in the highest, and upon earth peace, among men good pleasure.' This you will observe, is a stanza in three clauses.

Now it is essential for us to remember that we are dealing here with poetry and not with prose; and the distinctive feature of Hebrew poetry is its parallelism. But the parallelism of this stanza is defective; for, in the first place, you have the three important words in the first clause, 'glory,' 'God' and 'Highest,' followed by two words of importance in the second clause, 'earth' and 'peace'; and by two in the third, 'men' and 'good pleasure.' Secondly, the second clause begins with the word 'and,' while the third clause has no such conjunctive particle, and the need, almost necessity, of another conjunctive 'and' causes Tindale in 1534 to begin the third clause with the word 'and'—'and unto men rejoicing.' And in Cranmer's Bible, 1539, you find 'and unto men goodwill.' Again, 'upon the earth' forms the antithesis to the words 'in the highest'; the expression 'among men' in the third clause, following 'upon earth' in the second clause, is somewhat tautological, and represents very much the same thought. And the Greek phrase for 'among men of goodwill,' or 'good pleasure,' is not quite identical with our translation 'good will toward men.'

Besides the fact that the manuscript evidence for the *Textus Receptus* is not preponderant in weight, there is good reason for questioning whether it furnishes the most satisfactory rendering. 'Among men goodwill unto them'—that would be the full presentation of our familiar reading.

(2) Turn your attention now to the alternative rendering, the one less familiar to us, which is followed in the Revised Version: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased,' or 'among men of good pleasure.' The advantages and the drawbacks of this rendering are obvious to every English reader. The chief objection to the rendering is the cumbrous and awkward expression 'among men in whom he is well pleased.' This is the fault more of our English than of the original Greek, which consists of only two words; and though the phrase is not usual, it admits of interesting and helpful interpretation. But the advantage in the improvement of the poetical parallelism is unquestionable. 'Peace' in the second clause answers to 'glory' in the first; 'on earth' in the second clause answers to 'in the highest' in the first; 'among men of good pleasure' in the second answers to 'God' in the first. We obtain a good and well-proportioned balance between the two clauses of the stanza. Heaven on the one side and earth on the other are united in the song of praise. Glory in the highest heaven; on earth peace and happiness. To God alone belongs the glory; and man, the object of His favour, receives the gift of peace. 'The object of his favour,' for that seems to be the right paraphrase. The word for 'good pleasure' is specially used of Divine good pleasure. You find it in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, ver. 5: 'according to the good pleasure of his will.' At the Baptism of our Lord and Saviour there came, you will remember, the Divine voice proclaiming, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' And it is that meaning of good pleasure from on high which attaches here to the description of mankind on earth for whom peace has come. The Latin translation of these words, which you find in the Vulgate, fails to reproduce the deep import of the original, and even Keble's well-known lines are ineffective for the same reason:

> . . . on earth be peace,
> And toward men of love, salvation and release.

'Men of goodwill,' of loving disposition—that is

a rendering altogether divergent from the meaning of the Angels' hymn. And similarly another proposed translation: 'among men in whom God specially delights,' namely, the elect and chosen of Israel, the special objects of Divine favour and goodness, though a better rendering (since it brings out the goodwill as that of God and not of men), is yet too far restrictive to serve for the Angels' hymn. Legitimate as it may be, it falls short of the large and generous conception which the antithesis between heaven and earth seems to demand.

We must return once more to Him,
Whose grace
This full world tends to dim.
We must, if needs be, tread His ways
Of poverty and pain,—
With single soul we must become
His men again.

The earth is ploughed with sorrows,
Scored to the bone her quivering breast
With deep red furrows,
Furrows that ache for healing and for rest.
Sow now the fair white seed of righteousness,—
Justice and mercy, honour and good faith,—
And ye shall harvest fruitfulness and peace
Even from these fields of death.

If so ye will!—
'To men of good-will—Peace!'
Peace that, through all the coming days,
Shall never cease to cheer and bless
The earth with merciful release
From this dark fearfulness and stress,
And fill it with the tender grace
Of His High Righteousness.[1]

The Angels' Song seems to ascend to the heaven of heavens, where all is ringing with the strain of praise; and then it echoes back to the region of earth, where all mankind are objects of Divine mercy and receive the new gift of peace. The second clause may, therefore, well mean 'and upon earth peace upon mankind, whom He loves.' It anticipates the evangelic declaration, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son.' The human race is the object, not of His wrath and displeasure, but of His love and goodness, and the birth of Jesus Christ is the pledge of Divine goodwill towards all mankind.

'To men of good-will—Peace!'
The advent promise, not yet all fulfilled,
Because man in his wilfulness
Has not so willed.
But still the promise stands,—
'To men of good-will—Peace!'
The earth doth travail,
Panging woes that cease not, nor shall cease,—
The lands cry hungrily for peace,
But peace is not, nor can be,—till
Good-will prevail
And bring release
From War's foul tyrannies.

Remember!—this the promise is—
'To men of good-will—Peace!'
If we would compass lasting peace,
We must cast out from our full treasuries
All that now stands between,
And makes the promise vain.[1]

[1] John Oxenham, *The King's High Way*, 56.

Peace Without and Peace Within.

Luke ii. 14.—'On earth peace.'

THE coming of the Son of God has wrought changes on earth which are unmistakable. There are the broad conspicuous changes in the outward conditions of society where Christianity prevails—the abolition of slavery, the increased reverence for womanhood and childhood, the acknowledgment that human life is sacred. Progress in such ways may have been strangely long delayed; it may have been broken and unequal; there may be ugly, evil things that it has left almost untouched, and many causes may have contributed to the result which after all has many blemishes. Yet the progress has been real; and at its centre there has moved and worked the Spirit of Jesus Christ. There are lines of light that, starting from His birth, persist in the world's course, and will not let its hope die down; we shall not fail to trace them if we remember the conditions and the methods of His work; we dare not either exaggerate their outcome or bound their promise. Hindered and threatened as they are, we see them and take courage in the midst of trouble and perplexity.

[1] John Oxenham, *The King's High Way*, 56.

1. What shall we say about that high anticipation which rings out afresh each Christmas in the echo of the Angels' Song? Some changes we can mark and trace to their spring in the hidden and unfathomable wonder of our Saviour's advent; but who that watches things around him, and reads the signs of the times, and looks into men's faces, and listens to their talk, and tries to realize the cares to which each day the vast majority of them wake, can easily feel reassured about that hope of peace which prophets, angels, saints have linked with the birth of Jesus Christ our Lord? 'His name shall be called The Prince of Peace'; 'of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end'; 'On earth peace'—we may seem at times to look in vain for any earnest among men of the blessing that such words portend; here, we may be tempted to admit, things look as though the world had proved too hard, too quick and vigorous and stubborn in its own ways, to make room for the hope that God sent down to it, or to yield to the motives and forces which were to have worked out His purpose. The old disfigurements of human society, of national life, seem changed so little; the lust of gain and the passion for revenge break out in war and violence, or sullenly bide their time, fully armed or arming; while in civil life competition grows continually keener and more strenuous, and hardly less unpitying.

And surely as one watches these things, as one tries not merely to take them for granted, as one marks how vast a range of life and thought they rule, as one reads each day of their incidental results to nations and to individuals, they seem a strange and plain denial of the power of Christianity to work peace on earth; they are as though in this regard the world had won the mastery, and could say decisively to one man after another as he comes to meet it, 'What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me.'

And then, as we recall our gaze from the wide, general look of human society, and think over the conditions, the occupation, the experience of our own life, we may see much that hardly seems like the advance of peace. For peace is contrary not to conflict only, but to every form of restlessness; and many of us find it growing harder and harder to be restful. The haste of life increases around us; its demands come quickly and are urgent; the channels by which fresh interests and cares pour in on us are largely multiplied; the air seems full of questions, movements, troubles, schemes which we get little time to study, before they hurry to the front and claim that we shall know our relation and our bearing towards them. It is notoriously easy to exaggerate the peculiarities of one's own day; and slowness and peace are very different things; but to a certain degree the conditions of a life do really tell upon its character, and the peaceful temper really is more difficult and imperilled in a restless age. And still through all the strife around us, through all the weariness and restlessness of our own lives, the clear angelic voices speak of peace on earth; and as our hearts return to worship Him who was born for us, we are called to greet Him with an unchanged hope as Prince of Peace.

I turned the golden pages of the seer—
I heard the poet's song outsoar our sphere
Till mighty angels lent entrancèd ear.
'On earth be peace!' he sang, and souls of starry birth
Stretched comrade hands unto the fiery son of earth.

The prophet's spoil of knowledge falls to clay.
His wisdom is the dust of yesterday;
The poet's dream like mist wreaths drifts away
And o'er the blazing world-wreck haggard men descry
Flare of a wild red dawning in a lurid sky.

From all your gains we turn, we wearied men.
Our hearts are drenched in tears—tell us again
The tale of that white night in Bethlehem
When Love Divine in weakness sought a woman's breast
And—Child within a maiden's arms—wept Him to rest.[1]

It may be but very slowly that Christ's power tells upon the strife, the manifold conflict of the world at large; or rather, perhaps, it would be true to say that the results we see come slowly and, as it were, hesitatingly. For our measure of the progress made in such a work cannot be worth much; we can form so poor an imagination of its complex hindrances, and of all those details of separate lives and separate souls with which the unhastening Omnipotence of God deals forbear-

[1] Emily Orr, *A Harvester of Dreams*, 95.

ingly and tenderly. With us amplitude of scope means always some indifference to detail. But He waits on the least bit of better purpose in a man's heart just as He watches nations in their rise and fall, and governs all things in both heaven and earth; He will never overbear the freedom He has given, nor foreclose probation to save time: and how can we judge speed or slowness where a world-wide work is carried forward thus? It was well said, in a striking article in the *Times*, that the true lesson of the 'contrast between the ideal of Christianity and the actual facts of human life . . . is not that of the failure of Christianity, but of the immense difficulty of the task it has undertaken, and the incalculable value of so much of it as it has accomplished.' While, then, we watch and pray and work as God enables us for the increase of His peace on earth, in the dealings of nation with nation and of class with class, we must not be staggered if as yet the earnest of attainment seem obscure and little.

¶ We have to bear in mind that man's history before the Incarnation goes back for so many thousands of years that we are not able to imagine how old the race is, and that through all those long ages man became more and more steeped in sin and every kind of selfishness. It is as though God had only just come to live in our nature and recreate the race. The two thousand years since the Incarnation are only as two days in the life of the race. Nor is it merely that God is creating a new race. He is making the old one new. And therefore it has to fight against and conquer the awful tendency to sin which was accumulated through countless centuries of selfishness, before it can make God's life its own—that is, before it can by God's power live a life of love. Hence, while it is reasonable and right to expect great wonders to happen in individual lives and even in races, we must not be surprised if the progress of the whole race towards its ultimate perfection appears to our minds a slow one. If we could gain a view of the whole, instead of the small part we see now, it would no doubt appear to us to be extremely rapid.[1]

Peace and purity—these are two capital points in which the gospel was an innovation and revelation in the moral standard of the ancient world. The ancient world had noble, if imperfect, ideas of courage, of justice; it had noble thoughts of friendship; it had noble conceptions of public duty and of a man's debt to his country. But it looked upon war and conflict as the natural field for the highest virtues, as it looked upon purity as a matter of varying expediency and uncertain sentiment. It looked on the world as a battlefield for the trial of strength between nations and men, as science would sometimes fain see in the struggle for life an account of the natural world as we find it. It had no misgivings about strife and war: they were what men were born to by the law of their existence, conditions which none could alter, which none with honour could escape from. It was a great reversal of all accepted moral judgment, of all popular traditions, of all current assumptions, when the teaching of the gospel put in the forefront of its message God's value for peace, and His blessing upon it; when it placed peace as a Divine and magnificent object to be aimed at and sought for, with the earnestness with which men aimed at glory; when it set high among its own new Beatitudes, high among the tempers and virtues which were to renew mankind, the spirit, the self-restraint which make for peace. As it made us know what God thinks of purity, so it made us know what God thinks of peace. And both announcements were, in the strength with which they were made, surprises to the world. Both were corrections of men's natural and long-accepted ideas. Both raised the imperfect moral standards of men to a Divinely-sanctioned height, and, however in practice Christians may have fallen short of them, these standards of what is true and right never have been, and never can be, lowered.

2. But for ourselves, for the restlessness of our own separate lives, for the lack of peace in our own hearts, surely we ourselves are most to blame. For, indeed, the peace Christ came to bring, the peace which prophets saw far off and angels heralded as come at last, is near to every one of us; not one need fail of it who really seeks it. The forces of blessing are scattered and disguised and lost to sight as they toil on at their huge task in this bewildered and tumultuous world; only He who sent them out can follow them, rejoice in them, through all they do; but in individual lives their

[1] E. L. Strong, *The Incarnation of God*, 38.

work is plain for even us to see, and to desire, and by God's grace in some degree to know. For

There are in this loud stunning tide
Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide
Of th' everlasting chime;
Who carry music in their heart
Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,
Plying their daily task with busier feet,
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat.

They do not doubt about the meaning of the Angels' Song, or the reality of the power that works for its fulfilment. When they greet Christ as the Prince of Peace, they greet Him as they themselves have known Him; for, learning of Him, they have found rest unto their souls; following in His steps, abiding in His light, seeking constantly His grace, they have begun to know that peace which all the haste and stress of this world cannot overwhelm—the secret of calm strength and constancy in a restless, anxious age.

¶ 'I am going to end this day of peace' Mrs. Gladstone writes in a remarkable letter to her husband, 'by a few words to show that what you said to me did not lightly pass away from my mind. There is a beautiful little sentence in the works of Charles Lamb concerning one who had been afflicted: "He gave his heart to the purifier, and his will to the Sovereign Will of the Universe."

But there is a speech in the third Canto of the *Paradiso* of Dante, spoken by Piccarda, which is a rare gem: "In la sua voluntade è nostra pace." The words are few and simple, and yet they appear to me to have an inexpressible majesty of truth about them, to be almost as if they were spoken from the very mouth of God. It so happened that I first read that speech on a morning early in the year 1836, which was one of trial. I was profoundly impressed and profoundly sustained, almost absorbed, by these words. They cannot be too deeply graven upon the heart. In short, what we all want is that they should not come to us as an admonition from without, but as an instinct from within. They should not be adopted by effort, but they should be simply the habitual tone to which all tempers, affections, emotions are set. In the Christian mood, which ought never to be intermitted, the sense of this conviction should recur spontaneously, it should be the foundation of all mental thoughts and acts, and the measure to which the whole experience of life, inward and outward, is referred. The final state which we are to contemplate with hope, and to seek by discipline, is that in which our will shall be *one* with the will of God; shall live and move with it, even as the pulse of the blood in the extremities acts with the central movement of the heart. And this is to be obtained through a double process: first that of repressing the inclination of the will to act with reference to self as a centre; the second to cherish, exercise, and expand its new and heavenly power of acting according to the will of God, first perhaps by painful effort in great feebleness, but with continually augmenting regularity and force, until obedience become a necessity of second nature.'[1]

Peace in Three Dimensions.

Luke ii. 14.—'And on earth peace.'

THE peace of which the gospel speaks, the peace which our Lord promised to His disciples, is the peace of God; the peace which reigns supreme in His life and which reproduces itself in its essential characteristics in the lives of those who submit themselves to His will. Notice in what this peace consists. Not in inaction; God's activity is never ceasing. Not in insensibility; God's consciousness never sleeps. But in the complete harmony of His nature with itself. God's life is a life of profound peace, just because it is a life of unceasing activity, but of activity governed by universal law and adjusted in every detail to the requirements of that law. That is the Christian conception of peace, and when we apply it to human affairs we shall say that a man has attained complete peace when in every relationship of life his nature is expressing itself in its fullness as a complementary and adjusted part of one great whole of organized and harmonized activity.

Now putting aside the world of material nature, there are three main relationships in which every man stands—a relationship to himself, to his fellow-men, and to his God—and his peace depends upon his being related truly in this three-

[1] *Catherine Gladstone*, 122.

fold way; on his being related truly to himself, to his fellow-men, to his God.

1. First take his relationship to himself. A man is at peace with himself when his nature is at harmony with itself, when the true hierarchy is established there, when the faculties which should command are commanding, when those which should obey are obeying; when the supremacy of conscience, the master faculty of his nature, is freely acknowledged; when the intellect is content to interpret its behests, the passions to acclaim them, and the will to carry them into effect. You will notice that personal peace thus interpreted implies intense activity, for it can be attained only by the co-operation of all man's powers with each other. Each has its own particular share to contribute to the total result, the lowest as well as the highest. It is important to recognize this. All our faculties are given us to use, and our life becomes peaceful, in the true sense of the word, only when we are using them all in due subordination to each other. This end can be attained only by a severe struggle; the road to peace here, as elsewhere, lies through a region of acute conflict, but the struggle for self-mastery does not aim at the destruction of any of our faculties, or at refusal to accord to any of them its due expression. They are all necessary parts of our complete manhood. Our passions and desires, for instance, are quite as necessary as our intellects and our wills. We obtain self-mastery and therefore peace, not by ridding ourselves of our passions and desires, but by keeping them in their proper place, by restricting them to their proper channels, by directing them to their proper objects. A passionless man, no less than a passionate man, fails in this attainment. In the one case a chord is lacking, in the other it is sounded too loudly; in both cases alike the full harmony is marred.

¶ No one knew him (Mr. Gladstone) better in later life than Lord Morley, no one can have studied more deeply every phase of his career and character. Mrs. Gladstone, in a conversation with him in 1891, spoke of her husband's two opposing sides—the one impetuous, impatient, irrestrainable; the other all self-control, able to dismiss everything but the great central aim, to put aside all that was weakening or disturbing—that he had achieved this complete mastery of self, and had succeeded in the dire struggle ever since he was three- or four-and-twenty. This conquest he had won first by the natural grit of his character; second by ceaseless wrestling in prayer—prayer that had been abundantly answered.[1]

2. The second main relationship in which man stands is to his fellow-men, and Christianity leaves us in no doubt as to what this relationship ought to be. It is that of unselfish service. It is only when a man is endeavouring by every means in his power to discharge the duties which this relationship involves that he is on the road to peace. But experience shows that the immediate outcome of this endeavour is often the very opposite of peace, that it is often fierce conflict and strife. This was the experience of our Lord, of St. Paul, of all the early preachers and teachers of the gospel of peace. They came proclaiming the advent of the Kingdom of God, of that perfect social state in which the true relationship between men would be established, in which each would seek not his own but the common good; and the answer of the world was violent opposition, bitter persecution, prison, the torture chamber, and the Cross. History has repeated itself again and again in this respect. Permanent peace between man and man, and between nation and nation, can be attained only when the principles embodied in national and international life are those of God's eternal truth and justice, and this attainment can be the result only of long protracted strife and struggle. It is well to recognize that this must be so, for it has a very direct bearing on the situation with which we are now confronted. The true peacemakers are not those who vainly cry peace when there is no peace. They are the men, or the nations, who have intertwined these principles into the essential texture of their own lives, and are determined at whatever cost of loss or suffering to stand for their dominance in the world's affairs.

Were all the world a paradise of ease
'Twere easy then to live in peace.
Were all men wise, divine, and innocent,
Just, holy, peaceful, and content,
Kind, loving, true, and always good,

[1] *Catherine Gladstone*, 231.

As in the golden age they stood;
'Twere easy then to live
In all delight and glory, full of love,
Blest as the angels are above.

But we such principles must now attain
(If we true blessedness would gain)
As those are, which will help to make us reign
Over disorders, injuries,
Ingratitudes, calamities,
Affronts, oppressions, slanders, wrongs,
Lies, angers, bitter tongues,
The reach of malice must surmount, and quell
The very rage and power of hell.[1]

3. That brings us to the ultimate form of peace, the peace which consists in the complete harmony between man's nature and the highest object to which it is related—God's will and His eternal law. Harmonious activity of any kind can be obtained only when its different elements are regulated by one master principle and adjusted to the requirements of one master law. A musical composition has its theme, an army on active service has its plan of campaign, a work of fiction has its plot, and harmonious effort in each case is but the expression and embodiment of one or other of these master ideas. Take away the theme from a musical composition and it becomes a mere medley of meaningless sounds; take away its plan of campaign from an army and it rapidly degenerates into a disorganized mob; take away the plot from a novel and it loses all cohesion and attractive power. Just so is it with the complete system of human activity. Its harmony and peacefulness depend upon its being regulated by and leading up to the ultimate idea it is intended to express, the ultimate aim it is intended to accomplish. And that aim, that idea, is God's glory and the establishment of His Kingdom among men. Here we come to the very heart of the matter; to the true foundation of peace, to its primary and essential condition. If we are to attain to it in a complete and permanent form we must pierce beneath the relationships in which we stand to ourselves and to our fellow-men, and come face to face with the ultimate reality of things, with facts as they exist in the eternal consciousness of the Divine mind, and then, with the vision of beauty thus revealed ever before our eyes, make it our sole business, whatever the risk or sacrifice involved, to paint anew the story of human life in accordance with the Divine model there portrayed.

[1] Thomas Traherne.

The Commonplace.

Luke ii. 15.—'As the angels were gone away from them into heaven.'

THE ultimate test of our Christian life is the character and quality of our actions, not in moments of deep spiritual emotion, but in the succeeding hours when they have passed. For, after all, such experiences are but transitory and preparatory. We cannot live on 'thrills,' nor is it ever good for us to seek them, save as their memory may be an inspiration to holy living and faithful serving in the ordinary details and duties which go to make up daily life for everyone.

God does not reveal Himself to men in a continuous ministry of miracle. He does not do for men what they can do for themselves, otherwise His grace would be inimical to man's truest development, and would rob him of the opportunity of acquiring moral strength and fibre. This is why our angel-ministers are but visitors, whether they be clad in the sombre garments of sorrow or in the white raiment of joy. When they have gone we must turn the message they have brought into obedience, and translate their ministry to us into service for others. We may light our torches at the heavenly flame they bear, but we must carry the light with our own hands to illumine the daily round and common task. For ordinary life is our common opportunity of glorifying God in 'whatsoever we do, in word or in deed.' He who is always sighing for some extraordinary circumstance in which he may show his devotion, or prove his consecration, while at the same time neglecting the God-given opportunity of holy fidelity which ordinary life affords, is failing signally. We need to recover the glory of the commonplace, and to set it in the very centre of all our thinking; for the commonplace fills, for the most of us, the greater part of our existence.

'A commonplace life,' we say and we sigh,
But why should we sigh as we say?

The commonplace sun in the commonplace sky
Makes up the commonplace day;
And God, who regardeth each commonplace soul,
Out of commonplace lives makes His beautiful whole.

The common and mistaken tendency to despise and lose the value of the commonplace is seen mainly in three directions—in regard to duty, privilege, and service.

1. Our ordinary duties have, as a rule, so little glamour about them, they are so humdrum and call for so little heroism, that they bring us but scant measure of appreciation from others, and their sameness robs them of any inherent impulse. It is hard to take them up day by day and recognize them as opportunities for effective and fruitful Christian witness, and our common tendency is to look upon them as little more than irksome burdens. They seem, too, to conflict so often with our aspirations —and more often still with our inclinations—that we are again and again tempted to despise the mere idea of their value, and indeed to regard them merely as being necessary for the earning of an earthly wage. We are even inclined to think of them sometimes as being actually prejudicial to our growth in grace and holiness. And yet they are God's own appointment for us, arranged with a view to our fullest realization of life. It is not in spite of, but rather because of, and in, all these things that we are to be 'more than conquerors.'

'Those foolish fluttering wings!
Let them be still, the while I say mysterious things.
Now, what if I withhold the strength, the time, but ask
That you attempt for Me a harder task?
Not to adventure forth in boisterous weather,
But to remain
Just where I set you down. Your path is plain.
Rise cheerfully, and smile, on rainy days;
Tread dull, monotonous, accustomed ways;
Make toothsome puddings; do the tiresome sewing;
And let your heart delight itself in knowing
That I plan all.
Bear patiently and well with sudden crises—
Bruised foreheads, broken dolls, impatient feet;
Be diligent to plan out small surprises;
Be skilful, turning bitter into sweet.
My Kingdom shall not lose.
My kindred will not suffer
Because you let Me choose
A lowlier way, a rougher.
Come now, herein lies faith:
'Twas I who set your tether;
So, shall we walk . . . together?'[1]

2. In the sphere of Christian privilege, too, let us beware of adopting the same mental attitude toward things which have lost their show of value because they are always at hand. The tendency of our age, even in things of spiritual privilege, is to run after the special while looking down upon the merely ordinary. Missions, conferences, and occasions of a like nature are eagerly sought, while the ministrations of grace through the ordinary channels are neglected, and sometimes actually despised. Even among earnest Christian people, for instance, the habit of diligent Bible-reading has to an extent lost its hold on this account, while the prayer-meeting and regular fellowship of church-life are accorded but small place in desire and devotion. Like Naaman, we prefer the stately and broad streams of Abana and Pharpar to the less pretentious Jordan. And yet it is in the latter stream that healing and blessing are most frequently found. If, when the angels have gone away, their visit has not left us with a new appreciation of ordinary, and, let it be said, also priceless, Christian privileges, we are the worse for what should have made us better.

3. In service, too, we are inclined—especially the more youthful of us—to sigh for great opportunities. It is so much easier to think of doing big things than actually to accomplish small ones. It is so much more agreeable also to imagine ourselves as successful leaders of large causes than to recognize ourselves as unknown and unapplauded hewers of wood and drawers of water. We imagine that it would be easy to rule over cities, but find it both difficult and unpalatable to trade faithfully with pounds. And yet it is just the doing of that ordinary service which does not distinguish us from our fellows that capacitates us for higher work, and really makes us the followers of our Lord in deed and not in word

[1] Fay Inchfawn, *Verses of a House-Mother*, 21.

only. For it is a law, alike in the Kingdom of God and in the kingdom of man, that he only is fit for the seemingly greater tasks who has learned to be faithful in the obviously smaller ones.

¶ During the heaviest stress of the Civil War, when many matters of great moment were occupying his thoughts, Abraham Lincoln, walking one day through the woods, came across a fledgeling which had fallen from its nest, and whose life was consequently in danger. He picked up the little bird, examined the branches of the overhanging tree until the nest was discovered, and then tenderly placed it there. And the one who witnessed the act rightly regarded and recorded it as one of the greatest he had ever seen Lincoln accomplish. A small man may on occasion rise to do a big thing, but it takes a big man to do a small one with equal gladness, willingness, and delight.[1]

'I serve!'
And though I do no more than keep the road,
And here and there help one to bear his load,—
'I serve!'

'I serve!'
As He once served in lowliest estate,
I seek no more than Him to emulate,—
'I serve!'

'I serve!'
And while my best to His concern I give,
No higher honour mine, the while I live.
'I serve!'

'I serve!'
And when, my little service done, I die,
On hope of greater service I rely.
'I serve!'[2]

Let us go.

Luke ii. 15.—'Let us now go even unto Bethlehem.'

1. When the Emperor Augustus issued his decree for the enrolment of all his subjects, including the conquered Jews in the Holy Land, he little thought that he was ministering to the fulfilment of a Hebrew prophecy published seven hundred years before. Micah the Morashtite, prophesying in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, had clearly predicted that He who was to be ruler in Israel should come forth from Bethlehem; and to Bethlehem, from their distant home in Galilee, the imperial edict brought Joseph and his virgin bride just in time for the Messiah to be born there. If the inn at which they sought entertainment was, as has been supposed, the identical one that for centuries had been known as the house of Chimham, it stood upon the very ground of the hereditary residence successively of Boaz, of Jesse, and of David; but at this time it could not have been much better than the modern khan of Palestine—a square unroofed enclosure for cattle, with an arched recess or two at one side, all unfurnished, for travellers. These poor quarters, the best accommodation the town afforded, were found occupied by earlier guests. Weary with a journey of more than eighty miles, the rejected party repaired to a neighbouring cave occupied as a stable; and there, amid straw, and provender, and bleating cattle, that night the Saviour of the world was born—fit birthplace for Him who came to teach mankind that the soul of the meanest is as precious as that of the mightiest, for Him who in His life of sorrow had not where to lay His head, for Him who from His cross of shame was destined to rule the regenerate nations! But it is a sore rebuke to human kind, that for all the warnings of prophets and angels, not one was there to welcome the Child of hope, for whom heaven itself furnished a herald and a choir—no joyful preparation or reverent welcome for the advent of that Divine Heir of glory, on whose behalf the dark vault of night was so strangely lighted up, and at whose coming the tranquil air throbbed to the rushing of celestial wings, and the silence of the slumbering world became musical with the minstrelsy of God.

2. But to whom came these glad tidings and this triumphant song? To sages and monarchs, the wisest and mightiest of their race, resident in stately palaces and metropolitan cities? No, but to the wakeful shepherds of an obscure village, amid the chill dews of the winter night guarding their flocks from the wolf and the robber on the lonely hills. Simple and humble as they were, however, they were men worthy of the honour, for they believed and obeyed the message; not like

[1] J. Stuart Holden, *Redeeming Vision*, 124.
[2] John Oxenham, *'All Clear!'* 50.

the shepherd of Midian, fifteen hundred years before them, reasoning hard against the gracious promises of God, and yielding themselves at last reluctantly to His commands; but as soon as the angels were gone away into heaven, saying one to another, 'Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.' This was the first pilgrimage ever made to the place of our Saviour's birth; and who would not sooner accompany these rustic believers thither than march to Bethlehem in the train of monastic penitents, mailed crusaders or sceptred monarchs? Alive to the honour which Heaven had done them, they rejoiced to verify the angelic embassy and adore the new-born Prince of peace. For a moment their ravished ears locked up their other senses, and they could do nothing but listen to the gladsome chorus; but when the heavenly messenger and his radiant escort, wheeling in mid-air, returned upon their path, and the last echo of the grand refrain died away in the empyrean, then awaking from the trance of wonder, like men struck with a common emotion, they exclaimed, 'Let us go!' And they came with haste, not waiting to pen their flocks or apprise their friends; and, arriving in Bethlehem, found Joseph and Mary in the grotto, and the Babe lying in a manger.

3. The sublimest of all mysteries is the mystery which we celebrate at Christmas—the manifestation of Jehovah in the likeness of sinful flesh by birth of the Blessed Virgin. This is the primary miracle of Christianity—the assumption of human nature by the Divine in the Person of Christ the Lord. Incomprehensible and inscrutable, it involves neither confusion nor contradiction. There was no change in the Divinity, though it was enshrined in the humanity; and no change in the humanity, though it became the temple of the Divinity. Christ was 'perfect God,' while He tabernacled and dwelt among us; and yet He was also 'perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.' Thus our nature is indelibly stamped with dignity and honour. Bethlehem answers the question, 'What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?' And, gazing upon the manger, we feel awaking within us holy aspirations for a spiritual union with the Divinity, which for our infinite good was personally joined to our humanity. And this conjunction of the two natures in Christ furnishes the means and the medium through which such fellowship with the Father of the spirits of all flesh may be secured. For by the Incarnation the Son of God became our kinsman, our brother, our legal representative and substitute, suffering for sin in the very nature of the sinner, and so putting away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. By His birth of the Virgin Mary, He became the second Adam, restoring what was lost by the fall of the first; taking hold of our sunken humanity, and lifting it up forever; bringing believers into a new and everlasting covenant of grace, and making them joint-heirs with Himself to an infinite inheritance of glory.

4. Let us therefore go with the shepherds to Bethlehem, and greet the infant Immanuel in the manger, and with the wise men of the Orient, in acknowledgment of His Messianic royalty, present to Him our gifts—the pure gold of our love, the frankincense of our praise, and the sweet-smelling myrrh of our penitential faith.

(1) Let us take Him as our Teacher—the living oracle of the Father, the hidden Mind revealed, the supreme Will expressed, the infinite Heart uttering itself to man. God 'hath . . . spoken unto us by his Son.' May we sit with Mary at His feet, and receive with joy the gracious words that fall from His lips.

(2) Let us follow Him as our Example—the incarnation of all virtue, and the perfection of all obedience; 'in the likeness of sinful flesh, condemning sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' Walking as He walked, we cannot err; and, like Him on earth, we shall be with Him in heaven.

(3) And while we chant our Christmas carols and worship before the Lord the King, let us not forget the poor and needy, whom He came to save; praying and labouring to bring His kingdom of righteousness and peace to all sad and desolate hearts, emulating His Divine charity, and doing good to others as He hath done to us. 'For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.'

Carry me, Babe, to Bethlehem now,
For I would look on Thee, my God!
Thou art alone my goal,—and Thou,
Thou to that goal the only road.

From my deep slumbers bid me wake,
Call me,—no evil shall betide me;
Give me Thy heavenly hand to guide me,
And I shall not Heaven's way mistake.
So shall I straight to Bethlehem go,
Where I shall look on Thee, my God!
Thou art alone my goal,—and Thou,
Thou to that goal the only road.

Though I'm oppressed with want and woe,
Though I am clad in garments torn,
Though I'm a wanderer lost and lorn,
Guide me, my God! where'er I go!
Bring me, I pray, to Bethlehem now,
Where I may look on Thee, my God!
Thou art alone my goal,—and Thou,
Thou to that goal my only road.[1]

The Significance of the Nativity.

Luke ii. 15.—'Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass.'

THE Gospel of St. Luke has been described by one of the greatest literary critics, though himself not a Christian, as 'the most beautiful book in the world.' And in that beautiful book there is no passage of greater beauty and tenderness than the simple story which is in all our hearts this Christmas day. Modern lives of Christ have been written without number, and their authors have spent skill and devotion in the attempt to describe in fitting words the Birth of the world's Redeemer. But we turn away from their brilliant pages dissatisfied, and we read again with a growing admiration and reverence the matchless phrases in which St. Luke tells of the song of the angels, the faith of the shepherds, the adoring love of the maiden mother who kept in her heart all that was said of her wondrous Son. The story is so simple, so human, and we know it so well, that we do not always recognize, as we read, of how great a thing it tells—how wonderful a thing, full of daily consequence to us all.

[1] Sir John Bowring.

1. For the Birth of Jesus Christ is the turning-point in the world's history. Whether you accept His claims and obey His words or—which God forbid—disbelieve the one and reject the other, this is certain—that He rules the life of men to-day. For the civilized nations of the world, the years are reckoned from His Advent. The events of ancient history are recorded by the historian as having taken place so many years 'before Christ;' and the years of our modern life are 'years of our Lord.' *Anno Domini,* we say; but we rarely think of how far-reaching a theory of history and of conduct is here suggested to us. 'In the year of our Lord.' So all our years are named, and so they are in truth. For the greatness of Jesus Christ is not only the greatness of a Master of mankind who affects posterity by the memory of His wisdom and His example; it is the greatness of Him who is the First and the Last and the Living One, with whom a thousand years are but as one day, who is as truly present now for grace and blessing as He was in Bethlehem when the shepherds came in trembling faith to greet the long-looked-for Saviour of their race.

2. And how great is this deeper influence which Jesus of Nazareth has exercised over the wills and the passions of mankind. It is often said that Christendom is not really Christian, that the lives of the great majority of men and women are not consciously or perceptibly affected by the teaching of Christ. It is not easy to measure spiritual progress, whether of nations or of individuals, and the statement is probably only half true. But whether it be true or not, it is quite certain that the difference between Christian and non-Christian countries as regards all that makes life pure and lovely and of good report is wide indeed. However little we may think of Christ in our daily life, still every call of duty rings louder in our ears, every step of the way of duty has been made easier for us by that inheritance of the Christian centuries which is in our blood. And that inheritance of blessing comes from Jesus Christ Himself.

3. Yet once more—for we have not yet allowed ourselves to think of what is really the secret of that mighty influence—Christmas is not only the festival of the birth of a great Master, not

only the commemoration of the entrance of a great spiritual force into the world; it is the memorial of the Visitation of God. It was God who became man, who was born on this day—the Word who became flesh; that is the centre of the Christian Creeds. It was He who was from the beginning, the Eternal and Supreme, who is the Life and Light, not only of this world and of all that is on it, but of the millions of worlds that science reveals to us—it is He who became man for our sakes, and submitted, of His love, to the restraints and limitations of man's nature. And it is because we forget this, because we forget who it was that was born on the first Christmas Day, that we pay so little heed to His words and to His will. This was the great crisis in the history of mankind, when God Himself took our nature upon Him and was born of a virgin for our redemption.

¶ Feel fresh and happy. Thought of the leaders' meeting. There was the superintendent. There was a gardener, a baker, a cheesemonger, a postman and myself. We sat till near 10 p.m. Now what were the topics? When is the juvenile missionary meeting to be? When the society tea-meeting? How best to distribute the poor money? etc. Here were six people delightfully sitting in a quiet room to forward these ends. What is *proposed* by each of those ends? 'Peace on earth, goodwill to men.' The very heart and substance of the angels' song, and not a particle of anything else. No wonder that being so privileged as to get into such healthy air I have so often come home cured to the core—come home, as last night, so fresh, so calm, so delivered from all my fears and troubles. True, the gardener cares less than nothing for what forms the staple of my life's work; so much the better—*better*—BETTER; as the White Queen says in *Alice through the Looking-glass*—nor the postman, nor the baker. Why, the point of the thing is to *forget*—to merge. To find a common denominator, all sweet and calm, like sun and air, in which man agrees with man, and all men with God.[1]

To Bethlehem.

Luke ii. 15.—'Let us now go even unto Bethlehem.'

So said the shepherds one to another on that first Christmas eve, when they had heard the message of the angels, and had seen the shining glory round about them. Shall we follow them? For Christmas has come again, and once more the thoughts of men everywhere are turning to that little village far away on the uplands of Judæa.

1. Bethlehem is situated on a high and long-extending ridge. It crowns the top of this ridge with its white houses; while immediately below, on the slope of the hill, are well-cultivated terraces of vines and fig trees, and the valley at the foot is covered with rich cornfields, the successors of those in which Ruth gleaned after the reapers of Boaz. It is these cornfields that have given Bethlehem its name, for Bethlehem means 'the house of bread'; and to it Naomi came back from the famine of Moab because of its abundance of corn, just as the Israelites went down to Egypt in the days of Jacob. It is a scene of great fertility, contrasting vividly with the arid limestone hills that bound the horizon, and with the dreary wilderness of Judæa stretching immediately beyond. And David must have had the scene before the eye of his imagination at the time when, in the 65th Psalm, he broke out into the exulting words of admiration: The little hills shall rejoice, the sign of their joy being the vines which grow upon the terraces of the hills; the folds shall be full of sheep; the valleys shall stand thick with corn.

Bethlehem is the most Christian of all the towns of the Holy Land. It is the spot that has been most thoroughly imbued with the religion of its august Son. In its flourishing condition, every visitor feels that it is a suitable birth-place for a progressive faith, which goes on to perfection, and is continually making all things new. It keeps a firm root in the venerable past, while it adapts its growth to the expanding influences of the new day that is opening on the land. The becoming blue gown and the red mantilla which the women wear is the traditional dress which we see in the oldest paintings of the Virgin Mary. And we prefer to think that the inhabitants have derived their handsome features and graceful carriage—so different from those of all the other races of the land—not from the Norman blood of the Crusaders, as is alleged, but by unblemished descent from the old Jewish population in the time of David. The beauty of the children in

[1] James Smetham.

particular is remarkable; and not a few of them bear the hallowed name of Jesus. Indeed it would not be difficult to find in any home in Bethlehem a family group presenting the traditional appearance of Joseph and Mary and the Holy Child; and altogether a vivid sense of the reality of the beautiful domestic history, in which our Christianity originated—the simple family details which usher in the majestic event of the Incarnation—comes over one during a visit to this sacred place.

The centre of interest in the town is, of course, the Church of the Nativity. Surrounded by its three convents, Latin, Greek, and Armenian, it forms an enormous mass of buildings, like a mediæval fortress, rising up with imposing majesty from the midst of the small ordinary dwellings of the town. It occupies the eastern ridge of the hill, in front of the sunny market-place. As the oldest of all the Christian churches in the world, its hoary appearance awakens a profound feeling of veneration in the mind. The sun and rain of sixteen centuries have beaten upon it since the memorable day when, by order of Constantine the Great, it was built over the cave in the rock which was the reputed stable in which our Lord was born. When the other churches in the Holy Land were destroyed during the ravages of war, this building escaped, owing to the halo of special sacredness which surrounded it. It was spared even when the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem was burned to the ground. It passed scathless through the stormy period of the Crusades, and resisted the attacks of the fanatic Moslems, and to-day it is the only surviving monument of the oldest Christian times in the land. At first it belonged exclusively to the Latin Church; but for a long period the Greek and Armenian churches have found a common lodgment beneath its roof. It cannot be said, however, that they dwell together in unity as Christian brethren. The part of each church is distinctly marked out by impassable boundaries from the others. And here round the cradle of Incarnate Love, those who profess the same faith are bitterly divided—symbol of strifes and schisms that have occurred everywhere through all the Christian centuries.

On the ground of its architectural peculiarities and historical associations, the most interesting part of the Church of the Nativity is the nave, which is the common meeting-place of the three Christian sects. It is the only part of the original building of Constantine that remains, and has a severely grand style of its own. On both sides are ranged a double row of Corinthian pillars with obscure figures of saints painted on them. The roof was originally made of beams of cedar from Lebanon, but our own Edward IV. repaired it with rafters of solid oak sent out from England. It is easy to recall in imagination, when standing on the floor of this mother church of Christendom, the historical events connected with the sacred building, culminating in the coronation here of Baldwin, the Christian King of Jerusalem, whose unhappy reign was the last struggle to establish the chivalry of Europe in the East. Anywhere else the grand old nave would arrest the visitor, and hold him spell-bound by the impressiveness of its features and memories; but here it is only a passage-way leading to the more wonderful vault beneath, where the Saviour of the world was born.

¶ With a lighted taper in my hand I followed my guide down a narrow staircase into the sacred grotto, encased with Italian marbles, and decorated with numerous lamps, whose light dispelled the darkness and flashed back in brilliant gleams from burnished metal and polished stone. In a semicircular recess at the end of the grotto the full blaze of light is concentrated; and there on the marble floor a silver star worked into the stone indicates the spot where, according to the Latin inscription around it, 'Of the Virgin Mary Jesus Christ was born.' Over this star the roof of the recess is not more than two or three feet high, and hanging from it, close together, are the beautifully wrought lamps, making a ring of dazzling glory round the star. In other parts of the grotto are various altars, such as that which marks the spot where the wise men of the East offered their gifts; 'the Altar of the Innocents,' beneath which thousands of Herod's victims are said to be buried; and the place where the angel appeared to Joseph, commanding him to take the Holy Child away from its enemies down to Egypt. But these sites are manifestly apocryphal, and stand in the same relation to the grotto of the Nativity as the false incidents of the Gospel of the Infancy stand to the

true narrative of St. Luke's Gospel.[1]

2. But though we may never be able to visit the Church of the Nativity we may go to Bethlehem in spirit.

(1) Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, that we may find Christ. The words are still, as they were of old time, *a profession of faith*. Christ does not show Himself in the place where we should have been inclined to look for Him; He does not show Himself in the guise in which we should have been most ready to acknowledge Him. 'Can it be at Bethlehem,' the shepherds might have asked in old time, 'a poor and forgotten village, and not at Jerusalem, that the Lord will manifest Himself? Can it be as a babe lying in a manger that He will first appear who is to be the Saviour of His people?' Again and again the questions are rising in new forms and we still feel it hard to make a past experience our own. Self-sacrifice, humility, patience are glorious when they have gathered round them the halo of time. But for the present they are grievous. God's ways are not even now as our ways. If we are to find Christ we must look for Him where we should not naturally expect to see Him. We must lay aside our pride if we are indeed to welcome the Son who is given to us to-day. His first coming is the image of His comings still. He comes to us in the lowly places of the earth; He comes to us in the shape of the most helpless. He comes to us in the lonely outlying cottage, He comes to us in the crowded and neglected suburb, He comes to us in the penitent, the prisoner, the outcast. We have but to go a little way from our own homes to find some Bethlehem—some poor unnoticed spot—which Christ left heaven to glorify by His Presence. We have but to open our eyes and we shall see Him very near to us, even as He once was, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, ready to receive, even from us whom He saves, the offerings of grateful love.

¶ 'Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.' The form of that expression is significant and suggestive. These men proposed to go to Bethlehem, not to see if this thing of which they had heard had come to pass, but to see this thing which had come to pass. The former would have indicated doubt, or at least question; the latter is the affirmation of faith. They believed, and their pilgrimage to the little city was not for the purpose of dissipating their doubts, but for the demonstration and the satisfaction of their faith. Too often what we call faith misses this distinction. We profess to believe that the word of the Lord stands sure, but in reality we are waiting to see if it does. We go to see 'if,' instead of going to see 'that.' Many of us might well go to school to these simple shepherds of Bethlehem. Their simple deed, impelled by unquestioning faith, has come singing down through almost two thousand years, and still speaks of the vitality of real faith.[1]

(2) So let us now go even unto Bethlehem, in the next place, that we may serve Christ. The words are not only a profession of faith, they are also *a profession of devotion*. He who has found Christ will not rest till he has done something for Him. It may seem little that we can do, as we reckon great and small, but the soul rejects such measurement. The shepherds had no treasures of gold or frankincense or myrrh, like the Wise Men, but they had hearts to feel and lips to express their feelings; they could tell what they had heard and seen, and their words were blessed. The earthly gifts soon perished in the using, but these words Mary kept, as we read, and pondered in her heart. We are indeed for the most part endowed with an abundance of earthly goods, and of these we shall thankfully offer part to Christ if we have found Him. But if it be not so, if we can spare nothing from a store which hardly meets our natural wants, even then Christmas morning will not leave us without the opportunity of rendering a tribute to our Lord. We all have that which the shepherds had. We all have in part, like them, known the power and the love of Christ. This we can ourselves in turn declare to someone near to us who is in trouble or sorrow or sin. The tender look remains to cheer a lonely sufferer when the messenger of love has departed; the kind word checks the current of repining when reason is unavailing; the silent prayer is a spring of secret amendment when remonstrance is despised. At all times these offerings are within our reach; but to-day can we be

[1] H. Macmillan, *Gleanings in Holy Fields*, 46.

[1] A. B. Webber, *Stories and Poems or Public Addresses*, 71.

content till we have made someone happier, brighter, better, in the name and for the sake of Christ? To-day His words have a meaning which we cannot mistake: 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' To-day we may claim to recognize Him in His great humility, and so only shall we be allowed to know the transforming power of His Divine Presence.

(3) For, once again, let us now go even unto Bethlehem, that we may carry thence the thought of Christ to our pleasure and to our work. The words which are, as we have seen, first a profession of faith and then a profession of devotion, are also *a profession of hope*. If we have found Christ in His lowly resting-place, if we have served Him in the person of one whom He came to raise and cheer and save, we shall have learnt the secret of a noble and a happy life. The shepherds, after they had welcomed the royal Child, returned to their common duty; but they returned with the fullness of Divine praise in their hearts and on their lips. They knew at last that they had very near to them a Saviour—God veiled in flesh—and by that knowledge all earthly ministry was shown in its true light. To recognize the love of God in the infant of Bethlehem is now, as then, to acknowledge the Divine inheritance of all humanity. The abiding thought of that awful truth once manifested to men does not check the energy of work, but rather supports it by the assurance that Christ works with us, so far as we work truly. The thrilling sense of that amazing descent from heaven to earth once realized does not stop the natural flow of pleasure, but adds to that which is unstable and fleeting a power of unchangeable joy.

'If I had not come,' the Master said,
And, oh, have you ever thought at all
What it would have meant for this world of men
If He had not come to Bethlehem's stall!

For the bells would have rung no Christmas chimes,
The old, old story had ne'er been told,
And the angels' song had been silent all
If He had not come to this earth of old.

But He came, He came in the days of old,
To the Manger bed and the Cross of shame,
And the song of earth and the harps of heaven
Shall forever bless the Saviour's name.

And there's not a joy that has cheered our lives,
Nor a hope that lifts our souls on high,
But we owe to the matchless, boundless love
Of the Christ that came to the earth to die.

There are millions yet to whose weary lives
It is still as though He had not come.
Shall we hoard for ourselves our Christmas joy
And refuse to the starving world a crumb?

Let the love that brought Him to earth of old
Lead us out like Him to service true;
And so shall our Christmas be like Christ's
And our Christian lives be Christ-lives, too.[1]

The Prophecy and the Fulfilment.

Luke ii. 16.—'And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.'

1. So He was come at last! The desire of all nations; the hope of Israel, long delayed. The prophets had pictured man waiting, eager, striving, passionate, burning with fury against wickedness and cruelty and wrong. 'Oh that God would rend the heavens and come down!' they had cried. 'Surely the arm of the Lord is not shortened.' 'Awake, awake! put on strength, O arm of the Lord.' So they had lifted their eyes, and seen figures passing over a desert. 'Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone, . . . and my fury, it upheld me.' So in the heat of their strong passion, in the bitterness of their hearts, they had seen the vision that told of the Lord's coming.

2. 'And they came with haste, and found the babe lying in a manger.' That is all they found. Something so gentle and homely and sweet, this entry of our God. Just a flickering light in the night under the stars; just a light through a window in a dark yard, and a rough hill-village, low and dark amid the huddled stones of the

[1] A. B. Simpson.

ridge. And, within, cattle looming in the shadows, and one spot in the midst bright with torch or lamp; and a carpenter from Nazareth, bending tender and anxious, and a white, wearied, happy maiden-mother laid on the bed. In a manger on the soft hay a tiny Baby, with wondering eyes opening on a world that was strange to it. That was all. What happens all over the face of the earth, with endless repetitions at all times and places, wherever the race of man has been—one constant, unalterable fact, for ever recurring. The bitter travail and the blessed birth; just that and no more. So God in His Son slid upon our human scene, creeping in among us without a signal of disturbance, without a shock to the ordinary framework of affairs, without jar or violence. The night hung over with all its stars; the earth stood there in her steady sleep without a sound; and the moon came, and crossed, and looked, and sank as of old; and the dawn rose up, and men woke and went about their business; and the crowded inn was filled again with bustle, movement; all the habitual interests and works and cares and hopes, all the babble and bargains started into life. Another day had begun with its loud doings, its goings to and fro, its meetings and partings, joys and fears, its laughter and tears; all was as it had been, and should be again, and yet again. And what had happened in the night? A Child had been born; nothing more. No one need stop for that. No one need trouble to look in and see Mary and Joseph with the Baby in the hay.

3. And yet the Prophets were right. The strength of the Lord of Hosts was lodged there in the baby body. The seed of Calvary lay there within that soft and tender flesh. Through those little hands, white and delicate as flowers, nails would be run, and the brow so fair would wear the thorn. The zeal and the fury of high passion for righteousness would bear Him out into the loneliness of conflict, into the terrors and the pains, in restlessness and groanings to work out the awful tragedy, with the sweat of agony, with the loud cry of a broken heart, forsaken and alone. Lifted up to the scorn and slight of savage foes, hung naked between heaven and earth—it would all come to pass in the order of the days. He would be seen, indeed, coming from Edom, with His dyed garments from Bozrah, treading the winepress alone, with the blood sprinkled on His garments.

And with the Prophets agree the Apostles and Evangelists. He offers, according to their report, Himself as the absolutely sufficient fulfilment of all human life, and as the adequate support and consolation in all earthly trouble. 'Come unto me.' 'I will refresh you.' He is Himself the sole motive and interpretation of their existence. If they fail Him, they are lost. If they deny Him, they are denied before God. They who receive them receive Him, and in receiving Him receive the God who sent Him. A cup of cold water given in His Name is enough to win eternal reward. To keep His Word is to build on the rock. To build on anything else is to build on sand. He is utterly separate from all human sin. Never once does He, according to their report, dream of including Himself among sinners. More than that, as a Man on earth He wielded the direct prerogative of God. 'Who can forgive sins but God only?' Quite true. No one denies that. It is the root principle of Judaism. Yet in face of that direct challenge, He declares that He, the Son of Man, does so forgive. 'Thy sins be forgiven thee. Go in peace.' And yet again, in correlation with this Divine prerogative of forgiveness resting on His unique sinlessness, He assumes, also, the recognized prerogative of God in judging the earth. All life, all history, led up, according to Jewish prophecy, to the final act of the Divine justification. That was an unassailable conviction of every believer in the Law. And when that moment is reached, it is He, this quiet, unassuming Man, who will be found seated on the Throne; and according to men's relations with Him, and by no other test or standard, they will discover themselves to be judged. On that day there will be no other cry going out from the human lips but 'Lord! Lord!'

As Christ made those claims, you knew that they were natural, justified, true. There was no self-assertion in them. They simply stated the fact as you felt it. He said, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.' You knew it to be true; just as, when He said, 'Rise and walk,' you obeyed, and it was done. 'Does God alone forgive?' Yes! That must be so. Yet He, this Rabbi, forgives. We don't know how, but He does, and He has the right to. How can we help believing it? Does He

profess to be higher than the God-given law? Well then, so He is. We don't know how, but He says it; and it seems to us perfectly natural for Him to be saying it. Is He to be the final Judge? This is just what His presence somehow makes us expect. As He tells us of it, we find it absolutely palatable, absolutely obvious, absolutely certain. We are His; we have no value other than what He gives us. We ask for nothing from God except through Him. We trust ourselves utterly to Him for our salvation in eternity. Yes! and we defy you to do anything else, if you keep His company at all, and are His friend. You cannot be with Him and not find that you have taken towards Him the attitude that you naturally take towards God. You look to Him in the way in which you are in the habit of looking to God. You allow Him instinctively to assume towards you all that you ordinarily associate with God. You don't trouble about it. You don't ask why. In being with Him, it has happened. In talking with Him, your language has already taken this colour, your mind has adopted this tone and form and manner. Everyone does it, inevitably, whom He draws near to Him. You can escape from doing it only by violently recoiling from Him. One or the other it must be.

¶ Humbly and passionately I dare call Him Master. And I can't say more than that. The immanence of God and the life of Christ are my treasures. They warm existence and help one's worst hours. Buddha, Socrates, Mahomet, all the long chain of revelations of God so dear to the Broad Church (and rightly), do rank for me in a long chain of evolution, but they seem the more to show how much greater, warmer, more mysterious, more near to God Christ was. They never make one glow.[1]

The Circumcision.

Luke ii. 21.—'And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus.'

On the eighth day after His birth Jesus was circumcised. On the eighth day after Christmas Day, the Church keeps the Feast of His Circumcision. It seems strange to take the name of a Jewish rite for a Christian festival, and yet, behind this clumsy and somewhat technical term, 'circumcision,' lies a wide domain of thought, even for the Christian. It is this word, and what it stands for in the life of Christ, that connects the living Church of to-day with the dead Church of the past, the Church of God in Christ with the Church in preparation before the Christ.

1. In itself there is nothing very remarkable about the circumcision of the infant Christ. Like every other male Jewish child, on the eighth day after birth He received the seal of the covenant from God. It was all simple and natural, performed, doubtless, in the same humble shelter where the Child was born. As a religious institution, the rite originated at the time when Abraham, ninety and nine years of age, renewed his covenant with God. It stood not only for a seal of the inheritance of the land of promise, but as a sign of admission to the Church, and of individual consecration to the service of God.

Critics sometimes point out the use of circumcision among the ancient Egyptians as a proof that the Jews borrowed the practice. This is a matter of small consequence. The truth is, that not only in Egypt, as attested by the earliest monumental evidence, but in many different and widely scattered countries, was the rite known. It is not likely that the custom originated with any one people, but more probably that like instinct produced like form, and common causes brought about common practice. Starting even from the time of Abraham and tracing the religious use of the rite, remembering also its present scientific and hygienic as well as sacramental use, it may well be questioned whether any single custom in the life of man has had a more remarkable history.

2. Associated with the life of Christ, the act is invested with more than ordinary interest. Everything that was done to Jesus, and all that He did in conformity to law, sanitary, national, and ecclesiastical, is indicative of the great principle that, 'when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them that were under the law.' The time and even the place of His birth were ordered by law. Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem to pay their taxes. The cir-

[1] Edith Sichel, *New and Old*, 56.

cumcision denotes the same subjection to law. When eight days were accomplished, not sooner or later, in accordance with the law of the Church the Child was circumcised.

What a lesson of obedience to law both human and Divine, obedience to the Divine will manifested in human institutions. In these days many seem to think it a sign of strength to reject ordinances that have been approved by ages of use. Constitutional religion is not wanted. An institutional Christianity is discarded. A false individualism, manifested by throwing off all allegiance to law, is shown towards the Church as well as the State. There is a spirit of anarchy in relation to religion as well as to government. Learn from Jesus how to live by law as well as how to outgrow the need of law by love. See in so simple a rite as circumcision the Son of God conforming to the requirement of the Church in which He was born. Shall smaller souls lightly renounce their religious inheritance, or in foolish pride feel they have outgrown the need of institutions that have made them all they are, and given them all they have?

3. But there is a moral and spiritual as well as a literal circumcision. Even the Old Testament teaches that the heart, the lips, the ears, must be circumcised. And for us Christians, the literal circumcision, which is outward in the flesh, is, as St. Paul says, not circumcision; nay, if we were circumcised from a belief that the rite is necessary, Christ would profit us nothing. For, as the Romans are reminded, the true circumcision is 'that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.' And the really circumcised are Christians who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

What is the essence of this spiritual circumcision? Surely it is the mortification of earthly desire. The great problem of life, it has been said, is to keep desire in its proper place. For desire is the strongest of the chariot-horses of the soul; in whatever direction we are being borne, it is love of some kind that carries us forward. Desire was meant to be the attractive force which should keep the soul true to that Perfect and Awful Being who has a first claim on it; like those laws which oblige each planet to move, at whatever distance, round its sun. But since the Fall, human nature has resembled a planet that has burst away from its true orbit, and goes crashing about in space, drawn hither and thither by the attractive force of other bodies. Desire no longer centres in God, but is lavished upon a hundred perishing objects, mainly upon objects of sense. And with this degradation of desire the soul is degraded too. 'Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.' If the soul is drawn upwards towards God, it becomes gradually like God; if downwards towards the things of sense, it becomes like the things of sense; it becomes animalized, materialized, in any case degraded. Hence the necessity for the circumcision of the Spirit. The mortification of degraded desire, of desire which no longer centres in God, is not the byplay, but the most serious business, of a true Christian life. This is what our Lord meant by the searching words, 'If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: . . . if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.'

¶ If we look again into the vice and sin that undoubtedly disfigure the world we shall find much reason to believe that what is exceptional in human nature is not the evil tendency but the restraining conscience, and that it is chiefly the weakness of the distinctively human quality that is the origin of the evil. . . . In the animal world desire is usually followed without any other restraint than fear, while in man it is largely, though no doubt very imperfectly, limited by moral self-control. Most crimes spring not from anything wrong in the original and primal desire but from the imperfection of this higher, distinct or superadded element in our nature. The crimes of dishonesty and envy, when duly analysed, have at their basis simply a desire for the desirable—a natural and inevitable feeling. What is absent is the restraint which makes men refrain from taking or trying to take desirable things that belong to another. Sensual faults spring from a perfectly natural impulse, but the restraint which confines the action of that impulse to defined circumstances is wanting. Much, too, of the insensibility and hardness of the world is due to a

simple want of imagination which prevents us from adequately realizing the sufferings of others. The predatory, envious and ferocious feelings that disturb mankind operate unrestrained through the animal world, though man's superior intelligence gives his desires a special character and a greatly increased scope and introduces them into spheres inconceivable to the animal. Immoderate and uncontrolled desires are the root of most human crimes, but at the same time the self-restraint that limits desire, or self-seeking, by the rights of others, seems to be mainly, though not wholly, the prerogative of man.[1]

Lay me to sleep in sheltering flame,
O Master of the Hidden Fire!
Wash pure my heart, and cleanse for me
My soul's desire.

In flame of sunrise bathe my mind,
O Master of the Hidden Fire,
That, when I wake, clear-eyed may be
My soul's desire.[2]

Jesus.

Luke ii. 21.—'His name was called Jesus.'

1. He was not called Jesus for some accidental or sentimental reason. It was part of God's will. It was in accordance with law and order. His name was announced by the angel at the Annunciation, though it was not until the circumcision that the name was given with authority. What is there in the giving of a name? Why not name a child in the same off-hand way in which one names some household pet? Or why not let the child wait and choose his own name, just as some advocate the postponement of all religious rite and teaching so as not to bias a child? Because the giving of a name is a solemn act, standing as it does for the individual accountability to God; and a disregard of this and other similar forms is a part of that lawlessness which is rebuked by the whole life of Jesus, from the religious rite at the manger-cradle to the last quiet submission to law on the cross. Why, even on the Resurrection morn, Jesus, in the folding of the grave-clothes, observed the decency of forms.

[1] W. E. H. Lecky, *The Map of Life*, 79.
[2] William Sharp.

What circumcision was to the Jewish male child, baptism is, and more, to all children—the sign of admission to God's Kingdom and an official declaration of their name. And with the giving of the name comes the implication of a personal responsibility. If the Jewish rite meant something in the way of a covenant between the child and God—and who that reads the record of this remarkable race aright, can doubt that it has meant that?—how much more does baptism mean to the children of all races, wherever by land or sea the apostolic commission is fulfilled? Name the child, then, with authority, as Jesus was named. In baptism, which is circumcision outgrown and made universal, let it be declared of the child with authority that he is God's child, and that his very name stands for the fact of his spiritual sonship.

¶ Infant baptism is defended from its analogy, or rather essential identity, with circumcision, and rightly. But this distinction should always be remembered: in the Old Testament the Church and State were one, and circumcision had reference to both. It admitted to the Jewish State, with all the consequent rights and privileges. It was also an act of dedication with a spiritual meaning, and with reference to a spiritual society—the germ of the Christian Church. It is only in this last reference that baptism succeeds circumcision. Baptism of infants brings no regeneration and no grace in itself. It is the sign of influences to be used by the parents and the Church—prayer, example, training—and not only significant but efficacious in the impression it makes on the parents and the Church. It is the first maternal kiss by the Church of Christ on the forehead of the child. 'He took them in His arms.'[1]

2. There was nothing unusual about the name. It was a name which had been borne by hundreds and thousands of Israelites in days gone by. It was a name which was, doubtless, borne even then by hundreds of children among the hills of Galilee. His name was called Joshua—Jesus! It would have had, we must remember, no special meaning for those who heard it; and though the angelic message recalled the underlying significance of the word, yet its deepest significance is surely

[1] J. Ker, *Thoughts for Heart and Life*, 194.

this—that it was a common human name. It gives us, this simple human name, an insight into what we may venture to call the 'humanity' of God; it tells us that He is intelligible and has made Himself understood; it tells us that 'love' in God, though infinitely greater, means the same as, not something different from, what we call love in man. It is surely a matter for deep thought and unspeakable gratitude that the final answer to the great cry of the best men in all ages to God, 'Tell me thy name,' has been answered in the giving of the human name, which brings God so infinitely nearer than aught else can ever do. Now when little children ask us of God—what and who He is—we can simply answer, 'His name is called Jesus.' Pictures of Christ will tell them and tell us more than a thousand volumes of philosophers or theologians. . . . 'Tell me thy name.' 'His name is called Jesus.'

3. Yet it is the expression of His universal and most vital work. In that name He plants Himself down as a force in history. Wherever that name travels, whatever book records it; whatever hymns may sing it, whatever stones or marble proclaim it; over every sea, under every sun, down all generations; in every great temple, where it rings in refrain, in psalm and creed song, or in every darkened chamber, where it is whispered in the ears of dying men; in every desolate heart that still, in poverty and pain and terror and bereavement, can recall the familiar accents of that dear and blessed name—at all times and in all places it carries with it, it seals to man, the presence and power of one identical personality —'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.' In that name He has made it manifest to us what He is and what He would do; by that name He has laid His strong hands on our human story and reversed its direction and refashioned its form. And now that name, we say, abides for ever as the sole instrument through which His authority reaches over every man; and all His Church is but the body by which He puts forth for ever the vitality of the name, signing it on the forehead, sealing it on the heart—the name of the Lamb of God.

Come, lovely Name; life of our hope!
Lo, we hold our hearts wide ope!
Unlock thy cabinet of day,
Dearest Sweet, and come away.
Lo, how the thirsty lands
Gasp for thy golden showers, with long-stretched hands!
Lo, how the labouring earth
That hopes to be
All heaven by thee,
Leaps at thy birth! . . .

Come, royal Name; and pay the expense
Of all this precious patience;
O come away,
And kill the death of this delay.
O see so many worlds of barren years
Melted and measured out in seas of tears.
O see the weary lids of wakeful hope
(Love's eastern windows) all wide ope
With curtains drawn,
To catch the day-break of thy dawn.[1]

There is power still in that name.

(1) First, merely as a fact—merely as a memory—the name of Jesus stands behind all who are poor, hungry, outcast, forlorn, and forces them forward into public consideration. He, by being what He was, has made it for ever impossible that the poor shall always be forgotten. Before Him, without Him, though prophets and psalmists in Israel might lift up lowly voices on behalf of the poor, the world at large could afford to neglect them. It felt no positive demand laid on it to notice them. It had no conscience which required any particular duty towards them. They were there, but it felt no pang in ignoring them; no sting of reproach forbade it to pass by on the other side. These unfortunates had no claims, no rights. They had dropped out of the ranks. The big tide of life swept over them and they sank down, they went under, they lay in the darkness, as those that had been long dead. The disregard of the strong deadened their power to protest; it killed their self-respect. They themselves expected nothing, hoped for nothing; resigned themselves to public contempt, gave themselves over to the tyranny of their own weakness. They had not the least heart to suppose that anyone ought to care how they fared, or that any change would ever dawn for them. Even the Greeks, with their radiant ardour for civic

[1] Richard Crashaw.

life, never aimed at including within the light of liberty the population of slaves who had no rights. And if it was so in Greece, where things were fairest, can we even imagine the pathetic hopelessness of those millions of the poor over whom the vast empires of the East—Assyria, Egypt, Babylonia—trod with iron heels, those whom no man regarded, and who have left no syllable even to record their suffering or their fate; who went down into the pit in grim, unbroken silence, without a protest, unpitied, unwept, even by themselves.

Ah! you say, is it not even so to-day with thousands? No; for, bad as is our situation, sinful as is our neglect, still that dreadful darkness of the old days is broken; its hideous silence is at an end. Behind the poor is a Name, loud and strong, which compels the world to attend—a Name which forces consideration, a name which the conscience cannot obliterate or ignore. The Name has, by its unconquerable power, brought the poor up out of the darkness into the daylight. There they are!' and all men, now, must have eyes to see them, must have ears to hear their cries. 'There they are!' and the world can never again go on as if they were not there. It may struggle to forget them, or it may think that, in its hurry and heat, it has no time to notice them. But attend it shall! A voice arrests it, which it dare not refuse. 'Here are my poor,' Jesus says; 'What are you going to do with them?' And, however much the world would like to get rid of the difficulty, there is one retort which it would have made of old, but which is impossible now—the retort, 'It does not matter to me; they have no claim upon me; I have no duties towards them.' That is what can never now be publicly said by any society which even professes the name of Jesus—of Him who, when the foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests, had not for Himself so much as a place where to lay His head. That is the mighty change worked by this Name, merely through the fact of His having lived on this earth and been what He was. He has raised the level at which all discussion of the state of the poor must proceed. He has established a claim for them, which may be compromised or adjourned, but which can never be disputed.

¶ Carlyle dealt the deathblow to the 'laissez-faire' theory rampant in his day, and made each individual responsible for the race. He demonstrated that the sphere of duty does not terminate with ourselves and our next-door neighbours. There will be no pure air for the correctest Levite to breathe, till the laws of sanitation have been applied to the moral slums. 'Ye are my brethren,' said he, and he adds, as if conscious of his too denunciatory way of dealing with them, 'hence my rage and sorrow.' [1]

'Am I my brother's keeper?'
Yes, of a truth!
Thine asking is thine answer.
That self-condemning cry of Cain
Has been the plea of every selfish soul since then,
Which hath its brother slain.
God's word is plain,
And doth thy shrinking soul arraign.

Thy brother's keeper?
Yea, of a truth thou art!
For if not—who?
Are ye not both,—both thou and he,
Of God's great family?
How rid thee of thy soul's responsibility?
For every ill in all the world
Each soul is sponsor and account must bear.
And He, and he thy brother of despair,
Claim, of thy overmuch, their share.

Thou hast had good, and he the strangled days;
But now,—the old things pass.
No longer of thy grace
Is he content to live in evil case
For the anointing of thy shining face.
The old things pass.—Beware lest ye pass with them,
And your place
Become an emptiness! [2]

(2) But that Name is not only a memory of Him who, by His appearance among men nineteen hundred years ago, created a new conscience. It works, not only behind the poor as a memory, but within society as a force which vindicates for each separate soul its value in the sight of God and man. Each has it in him to become in Him

[1] H. Jones, *Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher*, 63.
[2] John Oxenham, *The King's High Way*, 67.

a child of God. It is the name of Jesus that historically has created this estimate of the worth of each individual man, by which each is endowed with his own singular dignity and hope. And what Jesus so created He still asserts. By His unceasing declaration each man has it in him to become by grace a child of God, each has it in him to become a ministering and active member in His living body. And therefore in turning the eyes of the social conscience upon the poor, the name of Jesus does not propose merely to leave them poor as a field for Christian charity. Far from it! It compels the social conscience, as it gazes upon those masses on whose behalf its attention is forcibly demanded, to break the mass up into separate individuals, each of whom has the same distinct value in the sight of God, and so disentangling each apart to ask again and again of each, with unceasing insistence, 'Lord, and what shall this man do?' 'Lord, what can he do?' 'What wouldst Thou have him to do? This man, and this, and this?' Each might be and do something. Each might be lifted from out of the miserable impotence into which poverty sinks him. Each might take his place, and stand in his lot, and find his work, and share in the interchange of healthy social life. Each might, each ought, so far as God's purpose goes. For in the Sermon on the Mount our Lord declares it to be the Father's intention that no one who is loyal to His Kingdom and its righteousness should be liable to dire anxiety over his food and clothes for the morrow any more than the birds or the lilies. The lilies are clothed more gloriously than Solomon; the birds are fed. And this by the Father's own care. And men are far more dear to Him than the flowers of the field or all the sparrows under heaven. Let them but seek His righteousness, and He will see to it that all the things they have need of (which He knows so well) will be added unto them. That is the law, the purpose, which He desires to see fulfilled, and, so far as it fails to be realized, the Divine intention is being thwarted by blunders of ours.

The Significance of a Name.

Luke ii. 21.—'His name was called Jesus.'

1. WHAT is in a name? So we are fond of amusing ourselves with asking, in the shallowest and least earnest of our sceptical moods. It tickles our conceit to fancy that we are superior to such an external accident as the form and spelling of a name. And yet human experience and human history are all dead against our light scoffing; these proclaim with every tongue the immense significance of names. Men who love know it well, as they fondle and caress the name of the beloved; and men who hate know it equally. For if not, and if a name means nothing, how is it that the moment any cause becomes strong enough to make itself felt those who fear and detest it hasten with all the speed in their power to fasten on it a name that will condemn it?

'Give a dog a bad name and hang him'—that is a proverb that goes deep. The men who desire to hang the dog know what they are about. The best and easiest way to crush a thing is to stamp it with an odious, ridiculous nickname. The name will carry about with it wherever it goes a libel against the party which it is intended to defame; it will beget contempt; it will seem by its absurdity to carry reason with it; it sets people in arms against the movement as soon as they have become aware of its existence. It wipes out the chance of their pausing to consider what may be said on its behalf; it lands them in a conclusion without having allowed them to hear the premises. So great is the power of a name. Many a cause never survives the imposition of its nickname; it sinks under the laughter or enmity which is thus evoked against it. The bad name succeeds and the dog is hanged. And, on the other hand, one of the great fascinations of history is to watch a strong and deep movement which has been met by this enemy bearing up against the adverse stress which the bad name has brought down upon it—refusing to succumb, nay, adopting the very name of scorn as a badge of its defiance, and bearing it on its flag till victory has purged it of its poisonous intentions and has transformed it into the dearest title which its adherents can claim or express. 'Puritan,' 'Methodist,' 'Whig,' 'Tory'—these are names which have survived the scorn in which they were given, and have become the battle-cries around which men rally.

2. It is hardly possible for the most careless reader to avoid being struck by the intense signi-

ficance which is attached to names in the Bible. Indeed the 'name' among the Hebrews was almost an equivalent of the 'personality' or 'character' or nature of the person or thing named; and consequently, when a writer wishes to express forcibly the nature of a person or place, he says, 'he will be called So-and-So' or 'his name will be So-and-So.'

It is in the light of this usage that we must read one of the most striking stories of the Old Testament history, the struggle of Jacob on the heights of Peniel. There, you will remember, Jacob is represented as struggling with an angel, who yet seems to be something more than angelic. In the mingling of fact and figure we cannot tell how much to take literally; but the heart of it is evidently the spiritual struggle in which Jacob feels himself to be engaged. 'And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. . . . And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.' In this mysterious scene we may see the perpetual effort of the nation whom Jacob represented to know the 'name' of God; and all the history of Israel in the Old Testament is a record of the gradual learning of that name, the growth in the apprehension of the nature and character of God.

The Presentation.

Luke ii. 22.—'They brought him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.'

1. For the origin of this custom we have to go back to that memorable night in Egypt when the Lord brought His people out of their grinding bondage by a 'strong hand and a mighty arm.' That night the Lord visited the land. That night, 'at midnight,' the Lord 'smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. . . . there was not a house where there was not one dead.' To this, of course, there was a great and notable exception. The Destroying Angel's visitation was meant for Egypt, not for Israel; and, in anticipation of it, the Lord had arranged for His people's safety. The paschal lamb was to be slain, and its blood sprinkled upon the door-posts and lintels; and to the obedient this promise of salvation was given: 'And the blood shall be to you a token upon the houses where ye are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.' It requires no special penetration to get at the meaning of the rite. The paschal lamb took the place of the firstborn of Israel. Its life was given for theirs, and when the Lord saw the blood sign on the door He passed over the redeemed. In virtue of this redemption the Lord asserted a special claim to the firstborn of man and beast. He said to Moses, 'Sanctify unto me all the firstborn . . . among the children of Israel, both of man and beast; it is mine.'

2. Now the presentation of Christ in the Temple and the purification of the blessed Virgin Mary were both performed merely in obedience to a Levitical law which was definitely abrogated in the Church of Christ. You ask, perhaps, what reason there was in perpetuating the memory of an obsolete Israelite observance, according to which the firstborn sons were redeemed from the service of Jehovah and the priesthood of the tribe of Levi was substituted in their place? Or again, why should the Church of Christ perpetuate the commemoration of the incident in which the Virgin observed the Mosaic rules of purification, rules which, after all, were based on the requirements of Eastern life, and which were involved in an intricate system of external ritual? Well, deep down beneath all such ordinances there lie ideas spiritual and indestructible. The disappearance of the Levitical system did not affect the permanent law of the spirit According to the Church of Christ it is not only the firstborn son, but every child who is born, that shall be brought unto God to be received into the bosom of the Church. According to the Church of Christ every Christian parent draws near to God in thanksgiving for mercies granted and blessings vouchsafed. It marks the hallowing of home life, not merely the removal of ceremonial uncleanness. In this larger fullness of self-dedication there is the joy of redemption from the defiling power of sin. There is no restriction of

sex, there is no obstacle in physical weakness, there is no reproach of bodily infirmity; there is simply free access for old and young alike to the altar of God; there is simply the prayer of self-dedication, the prayer of confession, and the self-surrender of body and soul.

3. More than that, of every child that is born God still says, 'It is mine.' Creation establishes the priority of God's claim: 'Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine.' We must all recognize the propriety of acknowledging the Divine ownership. The only question we have to face is, 'How shall we do it?' In the absence of definite teaching, but obeying the feeling every parent heart experiences, we say the case is met by adopting the old Jewish custom of presenting them to the Lord.

(1) Christ has sanctified childhood, and given it a new importance by His birth as the Babe of Bethlehem. In instituting comparisons we do so with those who were known as the Gentiles rather than with the Jews; for among the latter natural affection was intensified by faith in the living God, and the hope cherished by every Jewish woman that she might be the mother of the Messiah. But outside of Judah, what rights had a child? The heathen peoples looked upon a child as a thing absolutely at the disposal of its parent. The Roman law included in the right of parentage absolute power over the life of the child. In other cases, the State claimed what the Roman law conferred upon the parent, and decided the fate of the child 'according as it gave promise or not of doing service to the commonwealth.' Plato and Aristotle justify the exposure of infants. In India the destruction of child life was suppressed only by the strong hand of England, while in the South Sea Islands it prevailed till light triumphed over darkness in the signal victory of the Christian faith.

¶ At the time of our Lord's birth the balance of power in arms, as well as in arts and intellect, was held by Rome and Greece. How were children treated by them? For an answer turn to Farrar's *Seekers after God*. Thus he writes: 'The birth of a child in the house of a Greek or Roman was not necessarily a subject for rejoicing. If the father, when the child was first shown to him, stooped down and took it in his arms, it was received as a member of the family; if he left it unnoticed, then it was doomed to death, and was exposed in some lonely or barren place to the mercy of the wild beasts, or of the first passer-by. And even if the child escaped this fate . . . no halo of romance or poetry was shed over its early years. Until the child was full-grown, the absolute power of life or death rested in his father's hands, he had no freedom, and met with little notice. . . . All the innocent pleasures of infancy, the joys of the hearth, the charm of the domestic circle, the flow and sparkle of childish gaiety, were by the ancients but little appreciated.'

That is all that heathenism at its best has ever done for children; not much—if any—more than the most degraded forms of savagery to-day.[1]

(2) Christ has left His benediction on childhood. Christ's Apostles were not demi-gods, but men. Sanctified in Christ to the beautiful characters we know, they were very different men in the early days of their discipleship. They had their differences like other men. One subject of dispute among them was the question of precedence; another question arising out of it was, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven! Ah, how they misunderstood its character; what a revelation for them and for all times in our Saviour's answer: 'Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of Heaven.' Here you have the Divine idea of greatness—a little child; great, not in commanding ability, not in self-assertiveness, not in the power the world worships, but in purity, guilelessness, trustfulness. It is not without significance that the first beatitude is conferred on the childlike spirit—not the childish: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.'

¶ The world gives to manhood the crown of wisdom; but Christ gave to childhood the crown of the ages.[2]

O children, if the paradise our dream
Is found at all upon this earth we fret,

[1] J. W. W. Moeran, *Teaching by Illustration*, 31.
[2] E. G. Cheyne, *The Man with the Mirror*, 51.

To you the glory and to us the debt
Must aye belong! Forgive us if we seem
To hold our corded bales in more esteem.
The cares of market crowd our souls; and yet
In busiest hours we never quite forget
With what mild innocence your round eyes beam.
Give kisses, lest we grow too covetous
Of pilèd treasure on our dusty shelves:
Be near to guard when wealth is perilous,
For ye are strong and heaven-defended elves:
Lift up your lithe brown hands and pray for us,
Who dare not ask the cheapest boon ourselves.[1]

A Church Member.

Luke ii. 22.—'They brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord.'

THIS was the formal recognition that God had given the Child of Joseph and Mary a place among His chosen people; it symbolized Jesus' public reception into the membership of the Jewish Church.

We do not often think of Jesus as a Church-member. It is true that He did not join the Jewish Church of His own free choice. He was received into it as a helpless baby, exactly as the children of Christian parents are baptized among ourselves. That was a recognition of the social oneness of the family. A child is born not merely of his parents' bodies, but of their minds and souls. It is inevitable that a child's religious connections should be settled by his parents; it is manifestly God's intention. God delegates to them in large measure the roll of providence to their children. No parents ever think of allowing a child to decide whether he shall have good or bad manners. Nor does it occur to them to let him choose whether he will be educated or ignorant; they leave no stone unturned in their endeavour to give him the fullest equipment they can for the work of life. And if they be religious people, to whom God is a living reality and His purpose life's supreme duty and joy, it is not thinkable that they will allow their child to grow up in a state of unstable equilibrium spiritually, without any prejudice for or against religion, permitting him to make up his mind for himself whether he will serve God or not. They will exhaust their ingenuity in so bringing home God to that child's soul that, when he comes to make conscious decisions, he can decide almost only in one way. So Jesus through His parents was received into the membership of the Jewish Church, and their training was so effectual that He remained a loyal member all the days of His life. Granting the uniqueness of Jesus, let us not fail to give Joseph and Mary the credit due any father and mother whose boy at twelve says: 'I must be in my Father's house,' and whose son at thirty announces, 'It becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.' Blessed are they among men and among women who so sincerely live to be of use to their God on the earth that their children are caught by the spell of their consecration; who so truly draw inspiration from their places of worship that their children go to them eagerly expecting a like strength and guidance and peace; to whom God is so real and their devotion to Him so winsome that their children have no doubt of His actuality, and feel the attraction of life in partnership with Him.

¶ From the cradle I was brought up in a religious atmosphere. All my relations on my father's side have for ages been known as eminent for their piety. Some of them were giants in stature, and still more so in spiritual attainments. I have even now very vivid recollections of the prayers offered up at the Saturday evening prayer meetings by Uncles David and Rees. How they used to pour out their souls before God! How they would wrestle with God! Each of them presented to my imagination a living picture of wrestling Jacob. All these godly men took the deepest interest in me. How much I owe to their prayers and loving counsel is known to God only. Then there was the Sunday School, with all its hallowed influences. In those days the Sunday School in Wales was a grand institution for imbuing the child's mind with Biblical knowledge and Christian principles. I seem to have been born and brought up in the House of God, and among God's people. It may be truly said of me, as it was said of Timothy, 'And from a babe thou hast known the Holy Scriptures.'[1]

What did Jesus find in the Jewish Church?

1. He found in it the chief source of His own

[1] *Edward Cracroft Lefroy.*

[1] *Griffith John*, 4.

personal religious inspiration. The books which the Jewish Church had collected and preserved as containing the messages of God were His Bible. He attended its synagogues every Sabbath Day and joined in the service. To be sure, there were many things in the Jewish Scriptures with which Jesus did not wholly agree. There must have been much in the synagogue services that seemed to Him very crude and imperfect. The prayers He heard, as we read them to-day, contain clause after clause which we feel could not have adequately voiced the aspirations of His heart. He must have heard many an uninspired and uninspiring sermon from dull scribes, whose conventional opinions and want of earnestness and lack of heart must have grieved Him sorely. The feasts at Jerusalem, as He grew older, must often have seemed to Him perfunctory. But the point is that He used the imperfect Bible, attended the unsatisfactory synagogue service regularly, and remained a loyal and devoted Church-member.

Why did He do it? Because, with all its faults, Jesus felt that the Jewish Church was a great factor in accomplishing God's purpose in the world. He could not forget the generations of truly good men and women it had inspired and trained; He could not but be grateful for what it had done for Joseph and Mary, and for Himself, and for the best lives He saw round about Him; He could not but recognize His Father's voice speaking through its imperfect Scriptures; He knew that He Himself and His fellow-believers were helped by their common worship in the somewhat dull and crude synagogue services.

The best religious life our earth has seen was produced, not in isolation, but in the membership of a Church. Jesus had a personal religious experience, knew God for Himself, and often went aside for private prayer and thought in communion with the Father. But regularly on the Sabbath He went to the synagogue; found something essential in the fellowship of fellow-believers, ignorant and half-hearted as much of their religious life was; and got something that seemed to Him indispensable from the public services, even when a half-enlightened and formal scribe was the preacher.

2. Jesus used the Jewish Church as the fittest instrument through which He could do His personal work for the world. Here was a great institution, with a hold upon people's loyalty, the possessor of a splendid heritage. It shared to some extent His ideals; it was interested, at least nominally, in the cause that was dearest to Him. He would take it and leaven it so far as He could, and transform it until it conformed more nearly to God's will for it as He knew that will. He used its synagogue pulpits as the most effective platforms from which to secure a hearing for His message. He frequented the meetings of its teachers in the Temple at Jerusalem, and discussed questions with them, as the most convenient way of influencing the teachers of others. He found His closest and most sympathetic friends and fellow-workers among its members.

We have all to learn that we can make our largest contributions to the world through some organization which has at its disposal machinery we cannot possess alone. It takes an association to accomplish anything on a big scale, whether it be prison reform, or good government, or systematic charity, or the evangelization of the world. The individual must throw himself into the organization with whose purpose he is in sympathy; be willing to do his share of its routine work, to pay his dues, to accept more or less the policy of the whole, whether he altogether approves of it in detail or not; be ready to serve on its committees and merge his personality in the larger conjunct personality of the organization. It is precisely so with the purpose of God. How is human society to be leavened and lighted and salted with the ideals of Jesus? Think what a vast machinery must be set in motion. The Christian Church has the machinery in more or less effective operation, and it says, 'Are you in sympathy with my purpose—the purpose of Jesus? Then throw your personal force into me, let my machinery carry your influence into hosts of places where you personally cannot go, while you, individually, do some particular task in my work, just as Jesus did the work of a synagogue teacher in Galilee.'

¶ The Church is a corporation which puts the strong at the service of the weak. It collects the pure and the true and the unselfish into a single organized mass with the laggards and the lapsing and the tempted and the fallen; so that all the combined forces that make for good may be at the disposal of those who lack; so that the

best may buttress, and support, and lift, and carry along the worst; so that the resources of Christ may be distributed over the whole surface as far as possible, and the wealth of the saints be put to fullest profit. It welds us all together, so that by the leaven of the few the whole lump may be on the way to become leavened. This is our brotherhood in grace.

And as the Church does this in the mass, so also in each individual life. The Church pledges us to our best and purest moments; it holds us to them even when they have passed and dropped. We sink back under the drag of old burdensome errors, of dull depression, of flat, stale, unprofitable days. Yes! but the Church is then our succour. It assures us that, in spite of ourselves, we are still God's children. Though we lie dead as stones, hard and chill as iron, we are nevertheless of the household of God, of the Body of Christ. We may hold on; we may endure, under the authority and benediction of the Church, until the evil spirit is taken away, and the sweet hour of spiritual joy creeps in once more upon our souls.[1]

Simeon.

Luke ii. 25.—'And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon.'

We do not know who this old man was; he appears but for a moment in the Temple to welcome the Son of God and confess and rejoice in God's salvation, and then goes back to his home, and departs in peace to the glory-land whence came the Messiah to him. Tradition has attempted to identify Simeon with Rabbi Simeon, son of the famous Hillel, the father of Gamaliel; but there is no truth in this tradition. Simeon was a very usual name in Judæa, and there is no doubt that our Simeon was just an obscure old man of the common people, entirely unknown out of his own little circle, who for years had been a devout but unofficial student of those prophetic scriptures which had kindled in his heart, and kept burning for many years, the fire of faith and expectation; who, hoping against hope, had at last been rewarded by a revelation from God 'that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.' Many a great man has striven after an immortality of memory among men, only to die and be forgotten, even in the place where he lived and wrought what he fondly hoped would be immortal deeds; yet this obscure old man, who was a lover of God and a believer in His Son Jesus Christ, has attained an immortality which shall endure while the world stands, and in the world of glory shall live and shine among the greatest of the servants of God. True immortality comes only to those who associate themselves with the Lord's Christ. Not all who believe and receive Jesus shall be known in this world, and have their names preserved in the records of time; but none are too obscure to have their names written in the Lamb's book of life; none too obscure to live and shine for ever among the great unnumbered and numberless host of God's redeemed ones.

1. Simeon was just and devout. His character was summed up in these two words. They were enough, for they tell the whole story of his walk before God and man. It does not take many words to delineate character, for the reason that all true character is concentrated in one or two chief virtues, which form, as it were, the backbone of the lesser ones. A just man and devout is certain to be a good man, in the broad sense of the word; a kind, merciful, generous, and benevolent man. The Holy Spirit draws Enoch's character in a single brief sentence of four words, 'He walked with God,' and so doing, obtained 'this testimony, that he pleased God.' What more need be said of a man than that he walks with God. Job was 'a perfect and an upright' man; one that 'feared God, and eschewed evil.' What more could have been said of him to set him before us in perfect picture? 'Abraham believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.' Moses, great man as he was, has his portrait drawn also in these few words, 'He endured, as seeing him who is invisible.' In that single line we get at the secret of all Moses' power. Of Barnabas it is said, 'He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith.' Nothing more need be said to enable us to admire and trust this companion of the Apostle Paul. Zacharias and Elisabeth have their portraits drawn together, 'they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and

[1] H. Scott-Holland, *Helps to Faith and Practice*, 137.

ordinances of the Lord blameless.' It is said of one unnamed woman whom Jesus forgave that 'she loved much'; this was her character; we can easily take all the rest for granted. Now, of this good old witness and friend of God, it is simply said, 'he was just and devout.'

¶ The ingenuity of scholars is sometimes taxed to compose a memorial for the tombstone of some great and good man; and we read epitaphs, running into sentences of many words, in which the composers have endeavoured to set before the world the many virtues of the deceased. If I could be sure of having this written on my tombstone with truth, 'He was just and devout and waited for the coming of the Son of God,' I should want nothing higher or better said of me.[1]

It may be of some service to us if we can fairly analyse these two great virtues which made up the sum of Simeon's character.

(1) *He was just.*—The just man of the Scriptures is a man who is right with both God and man. First of all, the just man is a justified man. 'The just shall live by faith.' This term is almost always used to describe men who, having put their trust in God, have become righteous in His sight. The just, or the justified, man is he who has been set, or made, right with God; the rightened man. No man is by nature just with God. 'How should a man be just with God?' cries Job. That is, How shall a man demonstrate himself to be righteous in God's sight? Not by works which he has done, nor by any ceremonial performed. A sinful man can be justified with God only by faith in Him. Thus it is proclaimed by the gospel, 'Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.' In this sense, then, Simeon was a just man, a man who had believed in God, who 'justifieth the ungodly.'

But justification is not only the imputation of righteousness through faith in Christ; it is also the impartation of righteousness by the Holy Ghost through regeneration. Every truly justified or just man is also a regenerated man; and thus righteousness is not only a matter of standing with God, but also a matter of state as well. 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.' It is this that saves Christianity from being a mere theoretical faith. It is a religion of faith, truly, but of character as well. Not with God only was Simeon just; he was also just with men; that is, he was righteous as to his standing and state before God, and just and righteous in all his relations and dealings with men. Righteousness of character and actions, or practical holiness, is the final test of Christian character. 'Now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.'

¶ Righteousness of character springs from rightness of heart, and apart from the atonement and Spirit of Christ the human heart is wrong. The wail of Cotter Morison was that 'there is no cure for a bad heart,' and that multitudes of men and women around us have got bad hearts. But thank God! if 'there is no cure for a bad heart' the Spirit of God can give 'a new heart from which springs righteousness.[1]

(2) *He was devout.*—Simeon was devout as well as just. Now devoutness is that which describes our attitude towards God, without respect to law. It is the characteristic of personal relation. The devout man is the pious man, who loves and adores God for Himself. Loving His holiness, His goodness, His mercy and His truth, He seeks to imitate them in his own life. He walks with God in holy admiration and adoration all the days of his life. He beholds and admires His glory in all His work, and especially in all the manifestations of His grace towards men. He is a man of humility, prayer, praise. He loves God's law, lays up His precepts and commandments in his heart, and seeks to illustrate them in his life, simply for the purpose of glorifying God's holy name among men. Devoutness is not a mere devotion to God and His glory.

¶ An old peasant is at present reading in the portico. Eighty-four years have passed over his head, and he is almost entirely deaf; nevertheless he is reading aloud the second [chapter] of Matthew. Three days since he bespoke a Testament, but not being able to raise the money he has not redeemed it until the present moment; he has just brought thirty farthings. As I sur-

[1] G. F. Pentecost, *The Birth and Boyhood of Jesus*, 280.

[1] T. Waugh, *Twenty-Three Years a Missioner*, 151.

vey the silvery hair which overshadows his sunburnt countenance, the words of the song occur to me: 'Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.' [1]

2. Another characteristic of Simeon is named: 'the Holy Spirit was upon him.' In times of spiritual apostacy, when the accredited servants of God have become formal and perfunctory in the discharge of their duties, the Spirit retires from them, and chooses out for Himself some other, and perhaps even obscure, agents to do God's work in their stead. The Spirit had long since departed from the high priests and rulers of Jerusalem, and left them high and dry amid the husks and dead forms of service. In the meantime He had come upon Simeon and the pious Anna, and now spoke through them to the people, revealing to them the Child Jesus. Similar movements of the Spirit are of no unusual occurrence, even in the history of the Christian Church. How often has a spiritual degeneracy marked the public service of God in connection with the regularly constituted Churches and ministry. The ordination and orders may have been regular, and services of church or cathedral stately, the preaching more or less true in word; but all without the Spirit, and therefore all dead and lifeless; 'strange fire,' instead of fire from heaven, being the only energy; that is, the natural energy of the flesh substituted for the power of the Spirit. The Church has often been startled by the rising up of some obscure man or woman, who has suddenly appeared, preaching the gospel and leading the people to prayer, altogether apart from the regular channels or appointed means of grace.

During the last century there was such a manifestation of the Spirit, when the Wesleys were called forth to lead a new spiritual movement, and rescue true religion from the dead hands of a formal and degenerate clergy and Church. In later days we have seen the Spirit resting upon obscure, uneducated, and untrained laymen, whom God called to preach the gospel and arouse the Churches into a new life and evangelical activity. No greater man arose in the last generation than D. L. Moody, the New England farmer's lad, who, under God, awakened a sleeping Church and called a dead world to repentance and faith. So also, the Spirit of God came powerfully upon William and Catherine Booth, and through them the mighty Salvation Army has risen to rebuke the indifference of Church and Chapel to the perishing masses for whose souls neither Church nor clergy cared.

Yes, the Lord can work independently of His Church. He can work in spite of it. But, if the Church of the Lord were fully surrendered to the Holy Spirit, if she were alive and open to His inspirations, how greatly the visible resources of righteousness would be multiplied! There are bond-slaves now in darkness, waiting and looking for emancipation, and their servitude is being lengthened and deepened by the blindness and petrifaction of the Redeemer's Church. If the Church of Jesus had been truly alive, if she had cast aside her grave-clothes, if she had checked her exhausting fractiousness, if she had been less concerned with ceremonial trivialities, if she had been zealous, enthusiastic, indomitable, are there not multitudes still waiting for consolation and deliverance who would have found it long ago? Drunkards' wives and children: still waiting, still moaning! The frail wretched victims of the sweater; still waiting, still dying! The prisoners of poverty, always trembling in the terrors of the brink, or dropping into the awful actualities of grim despair: still waiting, still wailing, still dying! And this is only a little handful of the multitude of the enslaved who might have been lifted out of their deep pit and miry clay if only the Church of Christ had been filled with the Spirit of her Lord. These wounded wayfarers will be delivered, with the Church or without her. But if official religion pass by on the other side, then the Lord will find His ministers in other spheres; but woe be unto the Church which 'knew not the time of her visitation.' 'Her house will be left unto her desolate.'

3. Lastly, it is said that he had faith in God's promises. He not only believed in God, but he believed and expected the things which God promised and foretold. 'Having seen them afar off,' he 'was persuaded of them and embraced them.' He 'waited for the consolation of Israel.' Being familiar with the Scriptures, he had discovered that God had promised to visit and redeem His

[1] *Letters of George Borrow to the Bible Society*, 338.

people by the coming of the Messiah. In that Messiah he saw concentrated all the good things which God had prepared for His people, and he looked forward to His coming with all his heart and soul. All the consolations of a true Israelite are bound up in the Christ. If He come not, or be gone from the soul of man, his life goes down to the grave in sorrow and despair. 'All the candles in a country cannot make a day,' says the proverb. It is only the rising of the sun that can do that. 'The greatest confluence of comforts that the whole creation affordeth cannot make a day of light and gladness to the heart of a believer.' Only the rising of the Sun of Righteousness can do that for the soul. Simeon saw this great truth, and had set his heart upon the Lord's Christ that should come. He believed with all his soul that He would come, and he waited and hoped and longed day and night for His coming; and had no consolation or comfort in this life, or hope for the life to come, but in His coming.

¶ The story of Simeon always had an extraordinary fascination for me. Even as a very little boy I used to love to hear the congregation sing the patriarch's rapturous swan-song. However dark and dismal the night might be, however tired or sleepy I might feel, however alluring might be the attractions of the fireside, I had but to reflect that the evening service contained the Nunc Dimittis, and all difficulties instantly vanished. I made my way to the old grey church; but I am afraid I was not a reverent worshipper. I welcomed the earlier parts of the liturgy only because each, as it came, brought me so much nearer to 'Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.' I put all my soul into the singing of that sublime song; and when its last notes died away into silence, the service was over so far as I was concerned. So curiously and persistently do childish fancies intertwine themselves with early memories that I find it difficult, even at this hour, to believe that I never actually saw the aged Simeon standing beside the great marble pulpit with the wondrous Child in his arms. I have often wondered why this story, above all others, so completely captivated me. But now I understand. Simeon represented all that was best in my own boyhood. His apparent age was an optical illusion. The charm about Simeon was that, though he lived many years, he had not begun to grow old. Like me, he set his heart in boyhood upon seeing one day a great and wonderful spectacle; but, unlike me, he never once, through all the years, relinquished the confident hope of witnessing the fulfilment of his dream. I grew weary of waiting for my mother's ship; Simeon's expectancy never flagged.

It was an amazing achievement. From infancy to age he never once doubted that he should behold, with his own eyes, the coming of Israel's golden age. Through youth, through manhood, through middle-age—the period in which most of us yield up our dreamings—through the days of grey hairs and through the days of sunset, he clung with unwavering tenacity to the certainty that he should never taste of death till he had seen the Lord's anointed. Nobody can appreciate the splendour of the old man's faith unless he has first reviewed the history of that eventful time. For it was not a matter of mere years. Any man can keep on hoping if there is nothing to chill his enthusiasm. But in Simeon's case everything conspired to render improbable the realization of his dream.

Let any man who desires to estimate the magnificence of Simeon's faith reach down Milman's History of the Jews, and read again the last few pages of the tenth chapter. He will then live in one tense moment through the whole of Simeon's life, and see the world through Simeon's eyes. For Simeon lived through one long unbroken series of national tragedies and calamities. He saw the outbreak of the civil war; he saw faction fighting against faction; he saw the priests warring against the people; he saw the palace fortified against the temple, and the temple against the palace; and yet Simeon believed, in spite of everything, that he should see the golden age. He saw the coming of the foreign conquerors, first the Romans and then the Parthians. He saw his country reduced from proud and patriotic independence to abject and humiliating vassalage; he saw a Roman general outrage the temple by tearing aside the veil and standing defiantly in the awful solitudes of the Most Holy Place; he saw Jerusalem plundered and pillaged and sacked; and he saw the crowds of worshippers who had come to celebrate the feast of the Passover ruthlessly slaughtered by the pitiless invaders. And

yet Simeon believed that he should see the golden age. Worse still, he saw religion decay; he saw the temple neglected; he saw the sacrifices cease. But still he held his faith. He never doubted his dreams; he was sure that they would all come true. He sang through the whole of the storm. He was certain that his old eyes would yet gaze upon the face of the Messiah. His was an unconquerable soul.[1]

Nunc Dimittis.

Luke ii. 29.—'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.'

We recognize these words at once. They are the opening words of the canticle we call the Nunc Dimittis, these two words being the opening words in the Latin translation, in which it was, of course, for so many years sung in England and other countries. People talked about singing the 'Nunc Dimittis' just as we talk about singing 'Abide with me,' or 'Sun of my soul,' making use of the opening words of the hymn as a title for the hymn.

Let us think now of this 'Nunc Dimittis,' or 'Song of Simeon,' as the rubric calls it, directing us, although the direction seems now hardly needed, to sing it in English. The consideration of the canticle is especially suited to the season of Epiphany, seeing that the words are the words in which the aged Simeon greeted his infant Saviour.

1. It will show us a soul completed in the vision of salvation. 'Mine eyes have seen thy salvation.' If Carlyle's judgment is correct, and the degree of vision which dwells in a man is the correct measure of the man, then Simeon greatens visibly while he stands before us. The light in his eyes increases his spiritual stature. From the rank of an unfinished masterpiece he passes into the shining company of those to whom God has put His finishing touch. Simeon had been long a lover of the light. He never belonged to the unclean and self-willed fellowship of Mr. Blind-man, Mr. Hate-light, and Mrs. Bat's-eyes. He had lived for many a year with his windows open towards the east. But now the morning broke for him: what more had he to ask of God or man?

There is only one way in which we can excel him—that is by anticipating him. It was revealed to him, we are told, that he should not see death before he had seen Christ. We shall ask for ourselves a happier because an earlier gift, not to see life before we have seen Christ, not to see temptation before we have seen Christ, not to see trial before we have seen Christ. And if we see all things in that light, we shall not see in death, when it comes, anything that can affright us. Having welcomed Him in all the wonder of His power and love, there shall come to us, imperfect though we be, and still in the realm of the imperfect, a strange sense of reinforcement. We shall understand what Paul and all the saints have meant when they spoke of being 'complete in him.' We shall believe that God means to put us some day among His finished masterpieces, since He has given so great a gift to make us better than we are.

2. And we see, too, a soul completed in a vision not only of salvation for himself but of a glory and a radiance for all the world. 'Thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.' Would not Simeon's life and character have been an unfinished masterpiece still, if his vision had stopped short of this, if he had been content merely to take to his own soul the tidings of comfort and joy and had not spared a thought for God's greater purpose? The world is full of souls that are obviously unfinished because they are self-centred, and the strange thing is that such characters are often found even in the Church, rubbing shoulders with Simeon in the Temple; their conception of salvation begins and ends with themselves, and so long as their own comfort is assured they care not what becomes of the world around them. The kindest thing to say about them is that they are unfinished. God has much work to do upon them yet.

3. Two suggestive and interpretative things have happened to the Nunc Dimittis in the history of the Church. From very early times it formed a regular part of the service of Vespers and then of Compline, being counted a suitable act of praise for the evening of the day. It was as if believing souls, remembering where Simeon

[1] F. W. Boreham, *The Silver Shadow*, 71.

found the completion of his life, wanted to find in the same place the completion of every day—the final answer to the day's questions, the final covering to its sins, the final peace for its strivings. Long centuries afterwards, John Knox made it the close and climax of his Communion Service, and the fitness of that is also apparent. Like Simeon, those who come to their Master's table are unfinished souls. They are but the promise of what they shall be. They are 'ill content with what they are.' And then into the arms of their faith and desire God lays the Christ of promise, their salvation, their light, and their hope. Not Agamemnon's watchman, hailing that far-off victory-fire with leaps of joy, not Simeon in the Temple, hailing his Lord with a song that rings down the ages, should be gladder than they. For they have seen what prophets and kings desired to see, a Saviour who can bring them beyond their imperfections and set them among the finished works of God.

The Law and the Gospel.

Luke ii. 29.—'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word.'

1. THE 'Nunc Dimittis' of Simeon is the last and uttermost voice of a dying religion; it was the long day of Judaism that was closed by that refrain. Such a day it had been, so wonderful and so weary, so disastrous yet so glorious. Such woes, such pains, such deliverances; always on the verge of the supreme victory, yet never attaining it; always baffled and broken, yet never defeated. So the strange years had passed, and still the unconquerable prayer had gone up from the suffering remnant, still they had called on the name of the Lord, had spoken to one another and waited, and clung, and endured, murmuring always: 'Surely after two days he will revive us; yea, in the third day he will revive us again. And the desire of the nations shall come.' Yet still the hope tarried, still there was no response from the watchman; and it is all this that ends at last in that whisper of accepted release, as an old man, the very type and voice of that ancient covenant which was now drawing fast to its end, lets fall the words of withdrawal: 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.'

It was the service of prophetic Israel that was pronouncing its close—that was preparing its departure; its work of witness to Another who should come, that true Servant of the Lord who should take upon His own shoulder the service to which Israel was called, but which it was powerless to fulfil. That was the end; the work was done. It was in its very essence prophetic and therefore transitory; it laid down the lines of what should come hereafter; it evoked the consciousness of what was needed; it suggested everything and realized nothing; it revealed the deepest secrets of the love of God, and of the desire of men, yet it could not draw them together into an act of union. It bred a hunger which it left unfed; it fluttered with its wings in passionate endeavour, but it could not lift itself off the ground. It laid, therefore, demands upon God; it enabled Him, by its insistent calls, to respond to the wants He had created. And so it prophesied, it foretold, it kept watch and ward for that hidden arrival which it had learnt to know familiarly as an unseen friend. And now with that arrival its honourable charge was ended. At last there stood at the gate He to whom the porter openeth.

So died the Law and the Prophets—fulfilled in passing away, destroyed in being fulfilled. Yet the faith which displaced them still reposes upon them. It still presupposes them. And therefore Christianity requires the groundwork of Judaism to be ever renewed at its base; the working of the Law must always be continued as the primal experience to which grace makes response and brings relief. The Law, indeed, vanishes as an independent system. So far it is destroyed; but it is taken up into the new dispensation as a root element in the life. The curve of Christianity, starting from a more distant centre, sweeps within its radius the entire fabric of the smaller covenant. It reaches before, behind, and beyond it. And in so removing its distinct independence and including it as but one factor in co-operation with others, it cancels also the perilous hardships which belonged to it in its isolation; it purges it of its terror; it strips it of its curse; it turns its conviction of injustice into a proof of blessing. The Law remains, but Grace abounds. Grace pours itself round about it; Grace glows through it; Grace overflows it; Grace fills up all its hollows; Grace embraces it in a rush of ardour, and lifts

it high above its troubles, and bears it forward towards the goal that it saw, but could not attain.

2. Yes, but the Law is still there—not less rigid, but more exacting than ever. In the very heart of the Church its imperious demands accentuate their assertion, 'Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.' Not one jot or tittle of the Law shall fail. So it stands and each one of us can know the ever-growing glory of grace only according to the manner in which we grow more and more sensitive to the sharp discipline of the living Law. The Law abides within the faith of Christ, and our whole Christian career lies in our perpetual verification of that old impotence of which the Law is for ever convicting—an impotence which through its utter hopelessness becomes every day more apparent to us, and yet is ever turned into a praise by the unceasing entry which its confession offers to the rescuing Grace. That is our life—an ever repeated discovery of our own inability and of Christ's redeeming energy.

And therefore we may well sing evening after evening our Nunc Dimittis. For indeed, this song of Simeon can never be off our lips. Every day, every hour, we may have discovered anew that we must decrease, and He who comes must increase. Every day, every hour we may have found that our poor little effort, so gallantly designed, our own petty witness so fervently offered, must after all give way and yield place to the stronger than we. What we attempt, He realizes; what we aspire to, He achieves. We have struggled and striven with plaintive ingenuity, with bustling zeal, but after all, at our best, we have but suggested a possibility, we have but shadowed forth a hope. And even this we have flawed and distorted; and, realizing this, with what a sigh of relief we, if we be but loyal, will see the whole business on which our hearts have been set taken clean out of our bungling hands and done, not in our way, not by our fluttering flurry, but in God's own way, by His mighty arm, at one sweep. Lo, He enters, He puts us aside, He occupies our place, He undertakes for us, He brings our judgment into victory. Now is the time for us to remember Simeon in his unembittered surrender, in his unprotesting self-dismissal—now is our time to resign, to depart, to leave the field clear for the Divine action. Now let us sing it in quiet undertones, and as beneath an evening sky: 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation.'

The Vision of God.

Luke ii. 30.—'Mine eyes have seen thy salvation.'

THAT was the blessing of Simeon. What was it, then, that he really saw? A Babe—like any human babe. A Child—'set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.' A Light—only the mere promise of a coming dawn. A Sign—so hard to interpret, that it would be 'everywhere spoken against.' Yet faith mastered the secret and would not be stumbled, but cried adoringly, 'Mine eyes have seen thy salvation.' It came to him, interpreted in its true light by those voices of the prophets that he knew and loved so well, a marvellous Divine revelation in which was bound up the whole promise of the future for himself and all the sons of men.

It is just this gift of spiritual insight which can look behind signs and master their meaning that we most need to-day, in an age which is already weary of the materialism which has straitened its true scope and shortened its horizon. For faith in every age is the power of spiritual vision, the faculty which apprehends the unseen and eternal, the gift of realization by the use of which alone God can become real to our hearts. Let a man 'practise the presence of God.' So surely will he find that Presence become a reality. Let a man 'walk by faith, and not by sight.' So surely will he find that believing is seeing in the true spiritual sense.

If we could only trust God like Simeon, our whole powers would immediately become enlarged, and our whole being be fulfilled. There was a crew who, after many weeks at sea in dense fog, had come safely, under their captain's skilful guidance, right round Cape Horn from the western shores of South America and far up the east coast to Rio de Janeiro. They burst into cheers when, as the fog suddenly lifted for the first time, they saw right before them the entrance into harbour, and knew that through all those thousands of miles he had not made a mistake. So should

we reach our goal much more quickly, much more certainly, with infinite saving of care, if we believed more simply. If Faith could say at the lowly manger, at the presentation, at the cross, 'Mine eyes have seen thy salvation,' why should not Faith to-day say of the many manifestations of God which still mark each Christian life, 'I behold the same Salvation wondrously unfolded still'? What Simeon really 'saw' was that which the Heavenly Spirit alone could reveal—the Divine Lord in the human mother's arms, the Light which was ere long to lighten the Gentiles, the Glory which at the end of the age was to burst upon redeemed Israel and consummate her long history. Bethlehem, Cana, Gennesaret, Gethsemane, Calvary, Olivet were all alike included in that marvellous vision.

1. The vision of God is again and again in the Bible given us as the clue to all the deeper aspects of life and the remedy for all its evils. Just consider how often we meet with it in Old and New Testament alike. Now it is, as in the case of Jacob at Peniel, the secret of confidence in the hour of peril. As Jacob wrestled through that night of agonized prayer by the side of the babbling brook that sought openness and liberty from its encircling hills, he found the assurance of a salvation not his own which brought to his soul the sense of openness and liberty from its present straitened-ness, and he found it in the vision of God. He 'called the name of the place Peniel [the face of God]: for . . . I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved' (Gen. xxxii. 30). He had already realized the nearness of that Presence at his first going forth from home, in the ladder which stretched from the boulders of the stony hills of Benjamin up to the throne of God itself, so uniting the obstacles which barred his way with the God who through them all would bring him to his resting-place. The first 'House of God' (Bethel) in the world's history is the place where a tired, lonely man found God's presence nearer than his difficulties, and turned stones into pillows and pillows into pillars by an act of faith (Gen. xxviii. 16-19).

2. Again, it gives certainty concerning the call of God and the mission of life, as in the case of Moses, who beheld God in the desert. With him already there had been disenchantment from the world and disillusionment as to his people's hopes and desires and his own aims; now in the solitudes of Horeb, where so often God had spoken in the crises of lives and of history, comes the revelation in the bush 'burning yet not consumed' of the unquenchable power of God, the God who keeps alive (*cf.* 1 Tim. vi. 13, marg.), as well as makes alive, and with it the call and the assurance of the Presence: 'I AM hath sent you.' In that presence, he was taught the secret of continuance, the future of his mission, the certainty of success. We learn the true possibilities of life in seeing God (*cf.* Exod. iii. 14).

3. By the same vision we gather courage for life's tasks of difficulty. The vision to Joshua (Josh. v. 13-15) outside the walls of mighty Jericho might almost be called the Displacement of Joshua. The 'captain, the host of the Lord,' came and unseated Joshua from his place of command, and took the reins of power. But Joshua had One to lean on now whose presence ensured the completeness of victory. The 'straitly shut up' city opened its walls to Him when it would have kept them fast closed to Joshua. And Gideon, the son of Joash the Abiezrite, as he threshed wheat by the winepress to hide it from the Midianites, was taught the same lesson.

4. That vision also brings reassurance from despair and consolation in loneliness. 'The well of him that liveth and seeth me' is a well beside which have sat, with the same blessed result, a great many despairing folk besides Hagar (Gen. xvi. 13, 14). The vision of God is most of all for those moments in our lives when we despair of ourselves and of our fellow-men. Having come to an end of the possibilities of man, there is the greater room now for the possibilities of God. So to Elijah in that dark hour of his life comes the command, 'Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord,' and, following the command, the revelation, first of God's power in the whirlwind and the earthquake and the fire, then of God's unutterable tenderness and nearness in the 'still small voice' (1 Kings xix. 11-13). A man must first be stirred and shaken and cleansed before he will listen to the articulate silence of God. Then in that voice which 'does

not strive nor cry,' loud in its very stillness, comes to the stricken heart more ready to die than live, the reassurance of the unfailing, unchanging presence of the love that never wavers nor forsakes, of the pity that knows, as only God-Man can know, the deep sorrow of the heart, of the sympathy that will not leave nor fail till life's last task be done. We learn the lesson of life's anguish in seeing God.

5. Again, it is in the vision of God that man learns the truest vision of self. And so that vision brings the conviction of sin. When Job saw God he cried, 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes' (Job xlii. 5, 6). The unveiling of God achieves as its sure result the unveiling of self. When Isaiah saw the glory of the Lord fill the Temple, and heard the song of the seraphim, and felt the posts of the doors tremble, and marked how that holy place was filled with the smoke of the Divine Presence, then he too wailed, 'Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts' (Is. vi. 5). It is the most wonderful school in the world for rapid advance in self-knowledge of the humblest kind—to stand for a few minutes in the realized presence of God. And Peter by the Galilean Lake found just the same. The vision came in the facts of life, in the sign of the miraculous draught of fishes that revealed the Worker (Luke v. 8). The agonized 'Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord,' was the longing of a soul for purity which constrained him later on, when he knew Christ and his own heart better, to leap into the water (John xxi. 7) lest he might lose Him.

In the light of the Resurrection there is not an aspect of our life that does not receive new meaning from the open vision of God which through that Resurrection has become possible. The revelations of the great Forty Days are the unfolding of God, the bringing home to men and women of a Presence promised to them now for 'all the days.' There is the vision that brings consolation to the mourner beside the grave, as the Magdalene weeps by the sepulchre; that brings peace to the anxious disciples in the upper room, enlightenment to the perplexed thinkers on the road to Emmaus, certainty to the doubting Apostle when he is in danger of 'becoming faithless,' joy and assurance to the workers in their travail on the lake, promise to the Church as with upward-turned faces they behold their Risen Lord ascend to Heaven.

Lift up my soul to the infinite spaces
Stainless, fathomless, vast;
Let me not pass while the vision tarries,
Ere the hour of revealing is past.

Unbar the bolts in the house of my bondage,
Beautiful prison of the seen,
Flash down a ray from the stainless blue spaces
As hard by earth's lattice I lean.

See far away in the dawn of the ages
Burns a bush on the Midian sod,
And lo! in a moment the quiet, green pasture
Flames with the glory of God.

See far away, on a stone for a pillow,
Dreaming a dream of bliss,
An outcast awakens to wonder and worship,—
'The house of Jehovah is this.'

Open the eyes of my soul, O my Father,
To God-filled revealings like these,
For not e'en the Infinite, stainless blue spaces,
Can the thirst of our spirits appease.

Only Thy Hands, Compassionate Saviour,
Can dispel these earth mists as they rise;
Then, silently stealing like rose of the morning,
Thy glory shall dawn on our eyes.[1]

Jesus and the Gentiles.

Luke ii. 32.—'A light to lighten the Gentiles.'

In the Bavarian Tyrol there is a beautiful lake called the Königssee. The waters are blue like the heavens of God, while all around rise mighty mountains piled peak on peak, like towers of Babel climbing into the very dwelling-place of the Almighty. On a perfect summer day a little party was rowed across that lake, a paradise of quiet beauty in the midst of a universe of mountain grandeur. Reaching a certain spot the guide halted the boat, called for stillness, and fired an ancient blunderbuss in the air. When the

[1] J. E. Livock, *Songs and Lyrics of the Inner Life*, 36.

noise of the explosion had died away, for an instant there was silence. Then from a far-off mountain-side a cannon boomed forth. This was answered by another and another and another, always rising higher, until there seemed to be a battle in the heavens, rolling nearer and nearer. At last overhead there burst a deafening peal of thunder. And all this was only the echo of that first puny pistol shot.

Like this, the birth of Christ has echoed through the world. A tiny, helpless babe, born under pitiful conditions, in a manger at Bethlehem, the little Babe grew through childhood to manhood. And up to His thirtieth year, as boy and man, He lived the life of a humble artisan in the insignificant town of Nazareth. Then He gave up His trade and for a couple of brief years wandered through the countryside doing works of mercy, speaking words of truth and love. The rulers of the people seized Him and condemned Him to die the death of a criminal. Three crosses were set on Calvary. On the middle cross, between two thieves, Jesus, dying, spoke the words, 'It is finished.'

The pistol shot had been fired in Palestine, and a little company of men and women had heard its sound. Then all was silent. But now, hark! The mountains of the Gentiles echo the sound; louder and louder it resounds. Land answers land. The echo swells to a deafening roar, fast filling the world; from north to south, from east to west, louder and louder, wider and still wider, the ever-gathering sound echoes and re-echoes. And the end is not yet, for, at the last, from clouds and great glory shall burst that final thunder peal of His name, girdling the earth with its sound, swelling wide from pole to pole.

1. Look back one moment and consider the conditions which prevailed before Christ came. You are not asked to consider the savage condition of man, living like a brute; rather examine the condition of man in the most civilized nations and ages of the old world. Go to Egypt and Babylonia. Vast and splendid ruins attest the ancient wealth and luxury of those lands. We enter their buried palaces and tombs and behold depicted on the walls scenes from the triumph of kings, or see portrayed there the construction of mighty monuments. Hundreds of thousands of slaves, captives from other lands, or levies from the 'beasts of the people,' toil without pay and without reward beneath the lash of the taskmaster. We catch a glimpse of the condition of the great bulk of mankind in those days, oppressed, trampled under foot, their lives lives of cruel toil at the behest and beneath the rod of the rich and powerful. There was no care or respect for the individual man if he were poor or belonged to a foreign people. The lot of great masses was hopeless, forced labour. Human beings of the lower ranks of society were placed in the same category in which we of to-day reckon horses and oxen. Those splendid palaces, those pyramids, those temples, those hanging gardens, were founded on the corpses of men and women and little children, and the sorrows of nations cemented their walls. We unearth the records of the ancient rulers of these lands and read a story of cruelties which might well make the blood run cold: men flayed alive, hundreds of human beings impaled on stakes around a captured city, kings delighting to blind, with their own hands, their captured rivals; prisoners caged with beasts and hung up at the city gates; whole cities and regions of country devastated by a universal massacre, accompanied with indescribable outrage and torture. This is but a tithe of the horrors in which the conquerors delighted and of which they boasted. Justice and mercy alike seemed unknown.

Matthew Arnold has truly said in often quoted lines:

> On that hard, Pagan world disgust
> And secret loathing fell,
> Deep weariness and sated lust
> Made human life a Hell.

2. Our very judgment of life to-day is different from theirs, and it is largely this difference of standpoint which makes the conditions of the present time seem to us so abhorrent. Men in this country and in Europe, however lax they may be in the practice of their Christianity, are, nevertheless, in their judgment of right and wrong, in their estimate of the conditions of life, affected, often unwittingly, by the standard which Christ brought into the world. For a new spirit did enter into the world with Christ. A light began to lighten the darkness of the nations. Not for one moment are you to understand that God

had left the early world without light and hope. Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and many another prophet of Israel had seen angel visions and heard the song of glory to God and peace, goodwill among men. Zoroaster and Gautama, Plato, Lucretius, and many another wise man of the Gentiles had seen the brightness of a star pointing toward the manger at Bethlehem, and had done homage to the Divine incarnate in man. But shepherds of Israel and wise men of the Gentiles had but seen the day-star which precedes the rising of the sun. Man, in the early days of the world's history, you may liken to a new-born animal, blind-eyed and groping in darkness. Christ opened men's eyes, and made them see the evil of the things they were doing. It is the increasing power of vision in man, as he becomes more and more accustomed to the light which came by Christ, that makes him recoil in horror from those things which once gave him no shock. The coming of Christ has been like the slow rising of the sun—first a faint light which but makes the darkness visible, then one object and another looming up, strange and mysterious, out of the nothingness which was there before, then the heavens brightening with the glory of the coming sun.

3. Perhaps we can see best from the comparison of our own age with those which immediately precede it, both the vitality of Christianity, as the bettering power in the world, and the nature of the betterment it is working; for our age has seen in the whole Christian world a remarkable advance in the comprehension and practice of Christianity. The time was when men would trifle with life, and murder one another for what they called their honour, and society commended them. Our age has branded such acts as murder. Not long since men were put to death for theft. Our better understanding of the love of Christ has brought about a far higher valuation of life. Men formerly set civil or criminal penalties on religious beliefs which disagreed with their own. Our age has done very much toward freeing the consciences and intellects of men, and so promoting the knowledge and the love of God. In the early years of the last century lotteries were a recognized agency in raising money for all public and benevolent objects, and gambling was thus sanctioned by both State and Church. Gambling in any form is now condemned by both State and Church. Drunkenness and loose living are common enough to-day, but society has adopted a tone of condemnation toward them which was unknown at the commencement of the last century. A century ago public men lived without protest lives which to-day would render any public or even business trust impossible. Above all, we have thrown off the fearful curse of human slavery, and in so doing have made an enormous stride toward the recognition of the Christian truth of the liberty, equality, and fraternity of man.

¶ There are some who write and speak as if religion had far more power in ancient times than now. No doubt superstitions and fears had more influence then than now. But never did true religion have so powerful a hold on the human mind as to-day; never has ethical truth and belief in God, the Creator and Upholder of the universe, the Maker of man, the Father and Saviour of sinful men, had such moulding force in society as in modern days. Never before have the demands for justice, and for equality of opportunity for all the classes of society been so clearly made and admitted by all. Belief in, and action according to, ethical religion, is a more potent factor in the entire social development of man now proceeding than ever before, and is increasingly operative.[1]

Jesus and Israel.

Luke ii. 32.—'The glory of thy people Israel.'

To Simeon's prophetic gaze the infant Jesus, who had been brought into the Temple to be presented by His mother, was revealed as the promised Redeemer for whose Advent he had been so long waiting, and to greet whose coming his own departure had been so long delayed. Was the ancient saint's vision of faith mistaken? Did he deceive himself in giving utterance to such glorious anticipations? Was the Babe who had been brought thus into the Temple destined, as he supposed, to be not only the moral and spiritual Redeemer of His people, but also a light to lighten the Gentiles? Let history answer. Whatever else in history may be doubtful this much at least

[1] S. L. Gulick, *The Growth of the Kingdom of God*, 305.

is certain. The form of religion which traces its origin to Jesus Christ swept over the ancient world like a flood, and submerged the pagan systems of religion. It carried the torch of true religion not only throughout the Eastern world where it was lighted, but also throughout the West. In the early Christian centuries, as to-day, its missionaries were to be found in the uttermost parts of the earth. In the Western world it has given birth to a new civilization, which has nourished within its bosom the dominating races of the modern world, with whom the present, if not the future, lies. And even in the East, where its career has been more chequered, we must remember that it shares with Mohammedanism, which is a sort of crude mixture of Christianity and Judaism, the distinction of being the greatest of present spiritual forces. And doubtless in the future the East will once more become the scene of the greatest conquests of the religion of Jesus—in India, China, and Japan. It is clear that the religious future of the world lies with the great monotheistic religions, that is, with Christianity, Judaism and Muhammadanism. Of these the religion which possesses in largest measure the missionary spirit is bound to triumph in the end. And in this respect the superiority of Christianity is unquestioned. In the end, then, it is probable, if not certain that both Judaism and Muhammadanism will assume a Christian form and become absorbed in the religion of Christ. History has more than justified the prophetic words of Simeon. The Child of Bethlehem, as even the Jews who at present refuse to believe in Him admit, has proved Himself in very truth to be the light that was to lighten the Gentiles.

But what are we to say of the other claim that was advanced by the inspired Seer, when he uttered his prophetic pæan in the Temple? To his eyes the Child appeared destined to be not only the light of the Gentiles, but also the glory of Jehovah's people, Israel. How has this claim been—how can it be—justified?

1. In one of the highest flights of Old Testament prophecy a picture is drawn of Israel's mission and destiny, and these are declared to be the spreading throughout all the world of the knowledge of the true God. Jehovah is the true God—there is none other—and Israel is His missionary, His prophet. In the second part of the Book of Isaiah, the prophetic writer reverts to his theme again and again. He portrays an ideal figure who represents all that is best and highest in the Israelite nation, and he calls him not, as we might have expected, the Messiah, but the Servant of Jehovah. He describes, in marvellous language, how Jehovah's servant was chosen for his task, how he was prepared and made ready for his lofty mission, how he was protected by the Divine Providence till all was complete. 'In the shadow of His hand—the Servant in one passage says—hath Jehovah hid me; and he hath made me a polished shaft . . . and he said unto me, Thou art my servant, in whom I will be glorified.' In the same passage we are told how at first the Servant was filled with despondency and misgiving, and despaired of accomplishing the task set before him. How could he inspire the dull and unbelieving masses of his countrymen with his own sublime faith in Jehovah's promises, and his own ideal of Israel's mission and destiny? His doubts were met and dispelled by a fresh revelation from above. He was no longer to regard himself (so it was revealed to him) as merely the Divine instrument for restoring the scattered tribes of Jacob. The scope of his mission was to be far wider and grander. 'It is too light a thing,' says Jehovah addressing him, 'that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob' . . . therefore 'I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.'

2. How did this lofty ideal act upon the Israelite people? Did they rise to it and consecrate themselves for its accomplishment? Unfortunately, no. The popular ideas of Israel's mission and destiny were very different. Israel's destiny, according to popular ideas, was, it is true, to exercise a world-wide dominion. But it was to be a dominion of force, not a spiritual empire; the nations were to become vassal states of an imperial Sion, and their kings were to lick the dust at the feet of a military Messiah. The spiritual ideas of the great prophetic writer of the second part of the Book of Isaiah were by no means those of the great mass of the Jewish people. Such ideals could be cherished only in secret, by a chosen and select few. And so we

find that, six centuries after the portrait of Jehovah's Servant has been drawn, his mission was yet unfulfilled. So far from becoming missionaries of the true religion to the nations of the world, the Jewish people had jealously fenced round their Law and their religion with an almost impenetrable barrier. Aliens and non-Israelites had and could have little or no part or lot in the heritage of Jacob, and the name of Jew had become a byword among the nations for spiritual arrogance and religious exclusiveness.

3. And yet Simeon's words are true—Jesus was and is the glory of the Jewish race. For in Jesus we see embodied the flower and perfection of the old and glorious religion of Israel. He is the climax of the long line of prophets, priests and psalmists—the One in whom law and prophecy find their fulfilment and close. He it was, and He alone, who made it possible for the Jewish religion to burst its tribal bonds and become the religion of humanity. Nor has all this been denied by the spiritually enlightened in Israel. We sometimes forget that the men who laid the foundations of Christendom were Jews who had acknowledged the claims of Jesus. We too often forget that our New Testament as well as our Old is a Jewish Book, or rather collection of books, written by Jewish men who were possessed with the spirit of Jesus. Then, again, that marvellous band of missionaries—the like of which has never been seen before or since—which included Paul of Tarsus, consisted chiefly of Jewish men, whose unquenchable missionary zeal had been inspired by the Lord Jesus. Truly Jesus, measured by what He has achieved, and by what His spirit has accomplished, is the one and only member of the Jewish race who has fulfilled and transcended the prophetic aspirations regarding Israel's mission and destiny. It is therefore no meaningless claim that is made on His behalf when it is declared that He is the Glory of His people Israel.

It is too true, alas! that all through the Christian centuries down to to-day the scattered communities of the dispersed Jewish people have proudly and bitterly held themselves aloof from Christ and His Church. The fault of this, however, is not with our Divine Master, but with His erring and misguided followers. Amid the mists of un-christian controversy and persecution the face and figure of Jesus have become dimmed and blurred to Jewish eyes. What wonder if, amid the glow of Christian fire and hatred, the Jew should fail to recognize the features of the Redeemer? By being thus cut off from Jesus, Judaism has been made vastly poorer as a religion. It has lost all its ancient missionary power and become a mere tribal cult. Christendom, too, is impoverished by having Judaism as an opposing force outside. But let us make no mistake. Judaism has yet a great part to play in the religious future of the world. Some day the vision of the true Jesus will flash suddenly on the eyes of the Jewish people; He will appear to them as He appeared to Paul of Tarsus in that fierce blaze of light on the road to Damascus. And then He will appear to them not as the Destroyer of their race but as its Glorifier.

Judaism, transformed into a Jewish branch of the Christian Church, will then play a great part in Christendom. Its suppressed missionary power will burst forth with renewed ardour, and issue in a great revival of spiritual religion in the Christian Church all over the world. Then the consummation of Simeon's prophetic hymn will be realized, and Jesus will be acknowledged by His countrymen after the flesh to be what in reality He is, the Glory of His people Israel.

The Sword in the Soul.

Luke ii. 35.—'Yea, and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul.'

I see a Garden, my little son,
Thou art praying there God's will be done:
The ground is wet
With bloody sweat . . .
Yea, and fulfilled His Will shall be
In Thee and me!

Thou art bound, art bleeding in a hall . . .
There is wrath at my breast . . . The scourges fall;
And the swimming eyes of Thine agony
Have no part in me.
Lo, Thine hour is come!
My Bud, my Rose, I am distant, dumb!

Beloved, I can see a road;
They spur Thee along it as with a goad;
I hear Thy voice 'Ye must not weep' . . .
Babe, Babe, but my sobs will break Thy sleep!

To a Cross Thou art nailed by cruel men—
But I see myself and beside Thee then,
At the foot of that Cross—and it is His Will!
My little One, we will both lie still,
In one peace together, loving His Will! [1]

THE words of Simeon recall words which Jesus Himself spoke, solemnly and sadly, we may be sure: 'Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword' (Mt. x. 34). That sword is first to pierce the soul of His mother.

1. Now, every mother carries on her heart a heavy burden of anxiety for her children. One has sometimes heard mothers say that their children have never given them a moment's uneasiness. Such mothers may have had the best of children, but one may doubt if the children can have had the best of mothers, for it is in the nature of a good mother to be solicitous, and it is the careless, callous, worldly-minded mothers who are least solicitous. The better the mother, the greater her solicitude, the heavier the burden she carries on her heart. No mother ever had a more dutiful son than had Mary in Jesus, and no son ever caused his mother greater anguish. This was the price of His greatness and of hers. There were many occasions when the sword pierced her own soul. Almost as soon as Jesus was born He brought trouble and danger for His mother and her husband. They had to flee into Egypt from the wrath of the king. Though they escaped, all did not escape. The order went forth that all the children of Bethlehem two years old and under should be slain, and Rachel wept for her children and refused to be comforted because they were not. These murdered infants have been described as the earliest Christian martyrs, as the first victims of the world's spite against the Heavenly King. As Mary strained her ears to listen for her child's pursuers, as she learned of the grief of her sorrowing sisters, as she realized how narrowly her own child had escaped the clutches of those who sought His life, she drank her first bitter drops of maternal anguish, she trod the wine press that every mother treads when she watches the flickering life of her child in sickness, or when she shivers at the postman's knock, lest he should bring her tidings of her son's death. At such times the woman's heart is crucified afresh and the sword again pierces the mother's soul.

2. But again, Christ's very goodness would be a sword to pierce her soul. His idealism, His devotion to His high calling, His sacrificial sufferings and death would cause her many a pang of grief. Much of His life was to be lived in spiritual loneliness. Many of His thoughts and hopes would be unshared, many of His actions misunderstood, His very sufferings and death misinterpreted. This was to be the occasion of deep sorrow in Mary's life—that she would have to remain outside so much of her Son's life, that she would be removed from Him in thought and sympathy. If she could only share His life to the full—His ideals, His actions, His sufferings—she would be joyful even in the midst of sorrow. Her mother's anguish was in the unshared thought, the unshared life, and the unshared death of her Son. This was a sword that would pierce her soul.

3. The sword also pierced her own soul when Jesus brought division into her household. When Jesus spoke of families at variance and of a man's worst foes being they of his own household, He was speaking from experience. The first home in which that happened was His own. His first, and perhaps His worst, trials were in His own home. His most unfeeling critics were His own brothers and sisters. On one occasion they sought to lay hold on Him, to put Him under restraint, for they said, 'He is beside himself.' One result of this family estrangement was that Jesus was homeless. The Son of Man had not where to lay His head, though His brothers and sisters and mother still lived. Can we conceive of all this happening and His mother not being cut to the heart? It is always a great grief to a godly mother to behold her children at variance, and this grief Mary had in full measure. Even when she sided with His brothers and sisters against Jesus, as she would sometimes appear to have done, she would none the less deplore the estrangement. As she beheld this family feud, and knew her Son to be a homeless wanderer, the sword would pierce the mother's soul.

4. The sword again pierced her own soul when

[1] Michael Field, *Mystic Trees*, 64.

she beheld Jesus condemned of her own countrymen. For Mary was a zealous daughter of Israel. The Magnificat throbs with passionate patriotism. She believed that all generations would call her blessed, as the mother of Israel's hope and glory. Yet even her own generation did not call Him blessed. He came to His own but His own received Him not. His own townsmen hid as it were their faces from Him. He was despised and they esteemed Him not. A mother is always sensitive to what is said of her own son, but when the son comes to loom large in the public eye and becomes the target for everyone's shafts, this sensitiveness becomes an ever-recurring pain. One has read of public men who have had to keep certain newspapers out of their mother's sight, lest she should be pained by the calumnies of their enemies. The men themselves have become hardened to it, and the slings and arrows of outrageous criticism fall from them like pellets from a coat of mail. But they meet in a mother's heart like a sheaf of spears. Such a sheaf of spears met in Mary's heart as she beheld her Son's growing unpopularity; the anger and hatred He excited; the tide of feeling that arose against Him as He disappointed the worldly expectations of a fickle multitude, who cried, 'Hosanna!' one day, and 'Crucify him,' another. When He was hurried to a crucifixion amid the execrations of a maddened mob, the one who stood by and saw it all, and felt it more than all, was His mother. She had seen it coming. She had warned Him that it would come. One of our greatest pictures is called, 'the Shadow of the Cross.' In this we see Mary and Jesus in the workshop at Nazareth. Jesus has just laid down His tools, and is stretching Himself after His hard day's toil. His outstretched arms and upright figure cast the shadow of a cross on the wall behind, and Mary watches it with a startled and terrified look. Long before they came to the Cross it cast its shadow across the life of Mary as it shadowed the life of her Son, and, as the shadow deepened and darkened unto death, the sword pierced again her own soul.

5. The sword pierced her own soul when her Son died of a broken heart. There is one incident of the crucifixion the significance of which is often overlooked. As Jesus was hanging on the cross a Roman soldier thrust a spear into His side, and there came forth blood and water. What does that signify? Blood and water flowing from a wound in such circumstances would, we are told, be the symptom of a ruptured heart, and Christ died of a ruptured heart. It was not crucifixion that killed Jesus. After crucifixion men lingered on the cross for days. When the bodies had to be hurriedly taken down before the coming Sabbath, they found Christ's companions in crucifixion still alive, and they hastened their end by breaking their legs. To their great astonishment they found Jesus already dead. What was it that had already killed Him? The physical cause of Christ's death was heart-rupture brought on by agony of the mind. Christ died of a broken heart, and when Mary stood by and watched Him die of a broken heart, can you conceive that her own heart would not be broken too, that the spear thrust into her Son's side would not pierce her own soul?

¶ There are wonderful pictures in the Old World, everywhere, representing the descent from the cross, where the disciples touch the cold, stiff limbs, though they know that the spirit of Jesus is no longer in them, tenderly and lovingly bearing in their arms the lifeless body. The pictures of the Virgin Mary, many of the girl-mother with her baby—these have the unquenchable joy of youth and young motherhood—but there are some of the Mother of our Lord in the fulness of mature life, splendid and august in the maturity of her beauty and her sorrow. She holds her dead Son across her knees, and as she looks down upon the cold, rigid limbs, there is in her face sorrow too deep for tears. You can see there the destruction of all her hopes; all the sacrifices she has made, the disappointments, the loneliness of His life. She has felt them all as mothers do the experiences of their children, and now He is dead, and she is dying too.[1]

In shade of death's sad Tree
Stood Doleful She.
Ah She! now by none other
Name to be known, alas, but Sorrow's Mother.
Before her eyes
Hers, and the whole world's joys,
Hanging all torn she sees; and in His woes
And Pains, her Pangs and throes.

[1] A. V. G. Allen, *Phillips Brooks*, 617.

Each wound of His, from every Part,
All, more at home in her one heart.[1]

Anna a Prophetess.

Luke ii. 36.—'And there was one Anna, a prophetess.'

St. Luke's Gospel has been called the Gospel of womanhood. The word 'woman' occurs in Mark and Matthew forty-nine times, and in Luke alone forty-three times, almost as many times as in the two others put together. The pages of this Gospel are filled with the figures of women, and some of them are not to be found in the other Gospels at all.

St. Luke has pictured for us Mary the maid and Mary the mother as the type of perfect womanhood. St. Luke tells us all that we know about the cousin of the Virgin Mary, the saintly Elisabeth, the one to whom the Virgin turned first for confidence and consolation in the hour of her great trouble and joy. St. Luke tells us about the saintly prophetess Anna, one of the quiet of the land, worshipping and fasting and praying night and day in the Temple and waiting for the coming of the Lord. There they stand in those first two chapters: the saintly Virgin, the saintly wife, and the saintly widow—Mary, Elisabeth, Anna—bearing their witness that now a new gospel to saintly womanhood has come into the world.

1. 'Anna' is the Greek form of the Hebrew 'Hannah,' which means 'grace'; and Anna did not belie her name. Not only had she the dower of outward beauty associated with the women of her tribe, but God had made her, in Plato's phrase, 'beautiful within.' Grace, graceful, gracious—these three words indicate the name, person, and character of Anna. All we know of her is contained in these three verses in Luke, but when we look carefully into them, they convey a wonderfully definite impression of her life and character.

We have, first of all, certain biographical notes. She was the daughter of Phanuel and belonged to the tribe of Asher. Asher was one of the northern tribes, and the predictions concerning it, both in the blessing of Jacob and in the language of Moses, were very favourable; but Asher did not respond to its privileges and opportunities, and more than once in the Old Testament is reproved for failing in its duty (Judg. i. 31, v. 17). It is one of the tribes that did not return from captivity—one of the lost ten tribes—but apparently individual families belonging to this tribe returned to Palestine, and, while casting in their lot with Judah, carefully preserved their family history. This had been the case with the family to which Anna belonged, and it favours the idea that it had been a family of some social standing.

Then we have one or two interesting notes regarding the personal history of this woman. The Authorized Version leaves the impression that at the time when Anna is introduced to us she has reached the advanced age of eighty-four years. But that is not how the Evangelist puts it, and that is not the rendering of the Revised Version. Here is what the R.V. says, following the Greek text: 'She was of a great age, having lived with a husband seven years from her virginity, and she had been a widow even for four score and four years.' Eighty-four years a widow; that means that Anna was something like 106 years of age when we meet her in the New Testament.

2. The kind of life Anna led, during this long period, is indicated in the second half of ver. 37. 'Which departed not from the temple, worshipping with fastings and supplications night and day' (R.V.). If we think for a moment of what is involved in this sentence, if we use our imagination even a very little, we shall be constrained to confess that in the whole portrait gallery of the Bible there is not a more remarkable figure than that of the aged Anna. The language of the text would almost suggest that Anna lived within the precincts of the Temple, but that is very unlikely, as it would not be possible for a woman to take up residence within the Temple. What is meant, no doubt, by the strong statement of the Evangelist is that Anna took part in all the Temple services, that she was there day after day as one of the worshippers; but, not content with this, she might be found at any time in some quiet part of the Temple engaged in private devotions; the language is very striking: 'with fastings and supplications night and day.' It reveals a spirit of rare devotion, a true daughter of Jacob wrestling with God, and, like her great ancestor, prevailing with Him.

The burden of those prayers and supplications

[1] Richard Crashaw.

for eighty-four years is no secret; it was that Jehovah would draw near and manifest His power and pity in the redemption of His people. From her earliest days, before Anna became the young wife of one of the Temple priests, her pure soul felt the need of some special manifestation of the grace of God; the need of a Deliverer and a deliverance, not merely from outward foes, but from the enemies of the soul. To many of the Jews the Messianic hope resolved itself largely into deliverance of a political and material kind; but that was not the case with Anna, or with that little company of devout souls under her leadership who were praying and looking for a spiritual redemption.

She was sustained by a great hope—a hope that nourished faith and fortitude during the dark and cloudy days. It was her portrait that was before the Apostle Paul when he described the true Christian widow: 'Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, hath her hope set on God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.' It was through prayer that she found in God her refuge and consolation. By means of prayer we, too, are permitted to work with God towards the fulfilment of His good purpose for the human race.

3. Two things incline one to believe that Anna taught as well as prayed. One is that she is called a prophetess, which means that she was the medium of God's message and that she made known that message to others; the other is the statement that, after the recognition of the infant Christ, she spake of Him to all them that were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. 'She spake of him'—the Greek verb is in the imperfect tense implying that she was in the habit of speaking on this theme to kindred spirits in Jerusalem. And the legitimate inference from the whole passage is that Anna used her prophetic gift to inspire others.

It was due to Anna that a remnant of godly people in Jerusalem were prepared to welcome a spiritual Deliverer. Is it not permitted also to believe that her prayers helped to bring about the advent of Jesus Christ? He came in the fullness of the times. That meant, when the conditions were favourable for this new and wondrous manifestation of the Divine love, and it is quite certain that the life-work of Anna—her teachings and prayers during her widowhood of eighty-four years—helped greatly in thus preparing the way of the Lord.

THE SILENT YEARS.

Luke ii. 39-40, 51-52.—'And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.'

STEVENSON once wrote Henley a charming letter in which he pretends to have come upon some unknown works by the great masters, a new novel of Fielding—some half a dozen tragedies of Shakespeare, a fragment of a Journal kept by him for over six years, with an unfinished autobiography—and he tells how he feels that he would rush first, with a kind of fever of excitement, at these last two. But what literary might-have-been, if it could come true, would so move us as the discovery of some authentic record of the lost years of Jesus Christ? Once, we read, He stooped and traced something with His finger in the dust, and the next swirl down the street blotted out for ever the only words, so far as we hear, He ever wrote. We too would like to have seen them, with the others, to have been impressed and shamed by them, as they all were. But they are gone! And what a prodigal waste it seems that whole thirty years of our Lord's life, every hour of it full of Himself, are obliterated almost as utterly! No doubt the little bunch of primroses clutched in a child's hot hand does give us some idea of what the woods are like in spring, and we have vastly more than that, can never be too grateful that in the providence of God so much has been preserved. And yet it seems such niggardly treatment to offer us only these few

incidents of these few final years out of all the largesse of Christ's words and deeds, day after day, month after month, year after year.

Luke tells us that he took pains to gather tales and reminiscences of the Master, and rich treasure trove he found. What do we not owe to the old body—was it?—who had heard Christ speaking on the prodigal, and happily remembered it with vivid exactness till Luke, feeling this was the very best he had yet stumbled on, set it all down in the very centre of his picture, where the light falls full upon it? But why did he never find, or make, occasion to journey to Nazareth? And was there nobody left there who could have told him, or someone else, about the Child who grew up from a toddler in the same narrow street, whom they had often carried in their arms, who had lived, their close neighbour, just across the road, for half a lifetime; no friend of His mother's who was wont to drop in to the home, or no school comrade who many a day had roamed the hills with Him in summer? Think what it would have meant to the children to have had chapters of stories of their Lord when He was tiny like them, when He too was sent off to bed when the time came although He wasn't one bit sleepy, when He too had lessons, and there were messages to run, when He was living their own life with their very difficulties—and perhaps none are harder or more real, from life's start to its close, than those of a sensitive child. Like a mother who has lost her baby, and throughout the after years keeps dreaming what he would be like now if he had lived, so the Church has tried to think itself back into those silent years, and pictures Him as He was then, sometimes only with grotesque results, as in the Apocryphal Gospels, sometimes more happily, like Francis Thompson—

> Little Jesus, wast Thou shy
> Once, and just so small as I
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Didst Thou kneel at night to pray,
> And didst Thou join Thy hands, this way?
> And did they tire sometimes, being young,
> And make the prayer seem very long?
>
> . . . . . .
>
> And did Thy Mother at the night
> Kiss Thee, and fold the clothes in right?
> And didst Thou feel quite good in bed,
> Kissed, and sweet, and thy prayers said?

But it is all only imagination, and one is never sure where reverence ends. Or was there no one to tell them of how He bore Himself in an ordinary life like ours, how He with His clever fingers undid the tangles that so puzzle us; how He carried His soul evenly, spilling no drop of all God's will for Him, through the press and jostle of the streets; what He did about unreasonable customers, when they lost their temper about nothing at all; and how He managed concerning the other carpenter with his workshop not far off; and all the teasing problems about business competition and the like that so fret and worry loyal souls eager to follow closely in His steps? If we had seen Him at it, surely it would have been easier for us, so at least we feel, almost resentfully at times. And what of all that mass of sleepless and ungrudging unselfishness that later swept in such full flood and which must have been percolating all those earlier years through endless daily kindnesses into wherever there were tired and sick and sinful folk? It is all lost to us. The beautiful idyll at the start, and then the mists come down, and close thick and impenetrable, break once for an instant in a revealing tale, only to grow denser still. Peer as we may, till our eyes ache, we can see nothing but the wet grey walls; listen with hearts at strain, no sound, however faint, comes through to us. The Silent Years!

True, it is not all mere empty blankness. Scholars have patiently painted for us a picture of the times that is fairly detailed in places, the customs of the land, the habits of a household, the grace at meals, the very prayers and confession of faith repeated by Christ two and three times every day, the *Shema,* for example, that is, Dt vi. 4-9, xi. 13-21, Nu xv. 37-41; the order of the service in the Synagogue, where twice on Sabbath days and twice during the week He sat far back among the younger and more unimportant people, perhaps, as was the custom in some places, with his fellow carpenters, listening to the *Shema,* and the reading from the Law and the prophets, translated into the popular tongue, and followed by something in the nature of a sermon—all with what thoughts gradually forming in His mind, till at last He said quietly that Sabbath day, 'In this the prophet speaks of Me.' Moreover, in the study of Christ's teaching, fugitive glimpses not a few can be caught back into the years that lie be-

hind. Dr. Glover, in his vivid way, carries this far, and thinks that many of His metaphors are drawn direct from His home life, where He had often seen His mother's fingers patching and repatching children's clothes till they would hold together no longer, and had often sat and watched her meal tub with the leaven bubbles forming and bursting, bursting and forming, and the like. And that seems likely. Certainly, we have, as it were, our Lord's own personal copy of the Scriptures in our hands, over which He had pored and brooded all these silent years; can turn the pages, so to speak, of His very own Old Testament, and come on markings made by Him at passages that struck and haunted and impressed Him, that His mind had underlined. It is a fascinating study, for quite obviously He had His favourite books—look how browned with use, His use, is the parchment here and here—Deuteronomy as the first, although Hosea gave Him what would seem to have been His most used quotation. Evidently in His reading, as elsewhere, His was an amazingly original mind, bringing obscure things into prominence, with a quick eye for a neglected passage and an overlooked text, finding much in what to others was quite dumb until He opened their deaf ears to hear.

Nature, too, one gathers, always meant very much to Him. Paul, like Socrates, was in the essence a pure city man, happiest among the rush and dust and pressure of the streets, but our Lord loved the hills; and perhaps it was no new habit, thrust on Him by the busyness of His public life, to slip away for nights of prayer alone there with the august silence of the stars and the hush sleeping in the lonely mountain glens. Nature to Him was full of God, and characteristically what He found in it was the Divine compassion, a huge readiness to forgive and overlook, and an eager abandon of self-sacrificing love, stubborn in goodness even towards those insolent in their deliberate offences. A little bird lying dead upon the road awoke in Him no thoughts of 'nature red in tooth and claw,' but made Him certain that God had been there beside His tiny creature in its hour of need. But the birds always fascinated Him, flitting so unafraid through this great dangerous world. And it is likely it was ever so with Him. Indeed, as in Carlyle's early notebooks, one comes with delight on jottings of thoughts which, later, grew into the most characteristic of his pages, so, was there a day when, on the hills overlooking Nazareth, He saw the sunshine lying full and golden on the croft of some impudent blasphemer, or the rain falling healingly on the parched land of a notoriously evil liver? Was that night in Jerusalem when, with a sudden gust, it came howling up the alley rattling the shutters of the room where He talked with Nicodemus, the first time the wind in its mysteriousness had made Him think of God's ways towards His world? And surely it was One who had long loved flowers who stopped short in His sermon that day saying, But why listen to Me? Look at these preachers everywhere about you, who must surely bring it home to the most careworn soul! The fact too that children ran to Him has meaning, for those shrewd little judges give themselves only to certain types of men. But indeed it is emphasized for us that with all classes of folk He was popular, grew up a wise gracious laddie, universally liked, as one would have expected, for one cannot think of Christ at all, young or old, in public or in private, except as giving Himself for the people round about Him in a constant joyous unselfishness, living a life in which He Himself had no place, because always there were so many others to think of first that He never occurred to His own mind, and His entire existence was an answer to the prayer of the great saint, 'May my whole life be one act of love.' So indeed we are told it was.

Very impressive and informing is His mother's quite unconscious revelation of what lies so deeply in the shadows of the silent years, when she turned to Him so instinctively and hopefully at the embarrassing moment at the wedding feast at Cana. Somehow or other, probably enough through the appearance of Christ and His friends, and their acceptance of their last hour invitation, supplies had run short. And, noticing the whispering among the servants, Mary did a most revealing thing, slipped across to her Son, to the One whom she had never known to fail, on whom she could always depend—and with good reason, for always He was sure to find a way, and always He put Himself about for anyone in trouble, and always He contrived to make things easier for them somehow. And even when she received an answer that to us sounds, on the whole, some-

what discouraging, she whispered to the servants 'Don't worry, Jesus knows about it. Whatsoever He says to you, do it! He'll put things right! Now that He is aware of it, nobody need trouble any further.' Do not that instinctive appeal and utter confidence light up for us the hidden life with a queer vividness, give us a whole background of years and years of unfailing kindness, and the picture of One who simply could not keep Himself out of anybody's trouble, had to enter in and share it every time? Carlyle, for his part, refused to believe in the insincerity of the Muhammad of the earlier years, for this as his main reason, that his employer and his slave, those who saw him day by day, believed in him with all their hearts. And Christ emerges from the shadows that lie so thick upon His early life with this testimony —given Him quite unconsciously—that those fierce fires of family life which throw out into such bold relief the secret writing on our character and soul had revealed in Him that very same unselfishness and kindliness and grace, that generous ungrudging giving of Himself for others, which later was to put the whole round world so hugely in His debt. The Christ of the hidden years was the Christ we know.

It is true that when He entered on His mission His own family did not believe in it, were shocked and scandalized at what they heard, could account for it only in a flustered way on the supposition that He had gone off His head, and actually set out to bring home their poor sufferer. But, human nature being what it is, that is not unnatural; neither did the kinsmen of Muhammad or of Buddha believe in them at the start. They were, of all men, the least likely so to do! For that is a universal law that Montaigne sets down in his quizzical way when he remarks that at home he was reckoned as just a scribbling country laird, in the neighbouring town as a man of recognized business capacity, further afield as a noted author, and that the longer one travelled from him the greater he became. In Nazareth Christ was known to be a good man; He grew up in favour with God, and God's grace was upon Him, but in that respect there was to His fellow-countrymen nothing particularly noticeable about Him. Over the brow of the hill, in the next village, they had never heard that the neighbouring town had produced a remarkable man of God. Partly, I suppose, because in time, however loving was His life, however endless His kindnesses, they would just take it for granted as His way, what was to be expected of Him, and so think no more about it, as we all do with gracious spirits round about ourselves. And, probably enough, there was this in it also, that already in the silent years He had those strange ways which, in those of the public ministry, were to bring Him into such hot disrepute, and make His very name a byword in the more church-going circles that even then He consorted with queer people, and contaminated Himself, so they said, with sorry creatures no pure mind would condescend to touch. Galilee did rally to Him, till He proved to be too spiritual for their minds and taste. But, in His private days, there was no evidence that the fame of His Godlikeness had spread abroad, perhaps because the God He so resembled and whose life and character He so reproduced on human scale was not their God, but one more loving and more lovable, so that, Christ being what He was, they did not recognize He was like God.

At all events, some things are absolutely sure about those hidden years. This, to begin—that for the greater portion of His life Christ put His passion for righteousness and love of God into the living of an ordinary life like yours and mine, weaving His utter faith and glorious loyalty into the stuff of the common things which we too have to handle, but which, under our clumsy fingers, grow so tangled and so twisted and so broken and marred; that He lived where we have to live, immersed among material things, where many have felt holiness is just a far-off dream, as utterly beyond our reach as the genius of Michael Angelo or the witchery of Beethoven, beautiful but not for us, unless we can somehow withdraw out of this suffocating rush and press and clamour of insistent little duties, individually nothing, and yet necessarily filling the mind to the exclusion of the bigger things. And we too, out of the dust and whirl of life, find ourselves looking wistfully at cool and leisured folk who have time to be good-tempered, feeling that if we had their chance we also might climb far nearer to the stars than we stand now. But what hope is there for us, us so breathless, hot and bustled and tired and fretted, condemned to a low level of spirituality by our

lot in life? The business is so small and precarious that it exhausts our energies, or it is growing, and keeps claiming more and more from us. In either case our minds are like that track in the Lord's parable, beaten bare and hard by ceaseless traffic over it, so that, when the seed He sows alights on it, it cannot root, lies there a moment, and then some care or worry like a swift bird swoops down, and it is gone. What with the children and the household duties filling the whole day, or with the pressure of things down at the office or the schoolroom or the shop, God just fades out, and Christ gets overlooked, and nothing can come of it, in our case. But we need not despair. For one thing, Christ will find some way of breaking in to us. It was while Matthew sat at the receipt of custom that a shadow fell across his very money bags; it was while some fishermen were at their ordinary job, mending their nets, that the call came to them; it was when she had had a tiring fretting morning with everything going wrong—for she was dreadfully late in going for water and the other women were all home long ago—that the woman of Samaria came upon Jesus Christ. But even more impressive and more heartening is the fact that it was in a life like ours that Jesus walked with God. Days filled with many a duty in the home and in the workshop He consecrated as none others ever were, and amid everyday surroundings He worked out a character that stands in human records unique and alone. 'In order to dispose our hearts to devotion,' says old Bishop Wilson, 'the active life is to be preferred to the contemplative.' A startling dictum surely, robbing us of the plaintive and self-pitying excuses we make for ourselves. Yet Christ's case seems to prove it. No doubt it is difficult. But then Christ knows how difficult it is, and offers us the very grace that has been proved sufficient. Perhaps that hidden life was, in its way, the vastest of all His achievements. To do great things that we know matter and will tell, to pull ourselves together and be true at the crises we can see are crises—is that so hard as to be faithful in the individual little nothings that make up our common days, as patiently to weave our religion out of them, one little thread after one little thread, as John says the saints do, for is not their righteousness like linen clean and white? As that mighty scholar, A. B. Davidson, once said, 'To live an ordinary life well is the greatest of all deeds. To utter noble thoughts at a time, to do great actions in the heat of emulation and on the field—that is less severe. To do well the common things of life, to do them always well—that is hardest.' And that surely is the record of the silent years.

Again, this seems clear, that our Lord must have put much of His service of God and of His love to Him into the thoroughness with which He sawed and planed and laboured at His ordinary humdrum daily task. Justin Martyr tells us that in his day there were still implements in existence said to have come from Christ's own hands. One can be sure that His whole heart had been put into the making of them, that to every customer He gave His very best, as He stood there among the clean, sweet-smelling shavings, working at cradles and at coffins, those symbols of the mysteries and depth of life, and at the little homely things no less. Well may the Moravians pray in their litany, 'May the precious sweat of Thy labour lighten our toil,' and again, 'May Thy faithfulness in Thy handicraft make us faithful in our share of labour.' For, though one would have thought that Christ's touch upon common work would have sanctified and ennobled it in all Christian eyes, is anything more obvious to-day than the contempt in which we hold it? We count it a mere drudgery that must be borne, and put it through grudgingly with many a straying glance at the clock, until the wished-for Saturday afternoon slowly comes round, and then, that wearisome necessity safely over for another week, real life, to be called life, at long last begins. Partly, no doubt, that is due to the present industrial system, which, reducing men to mere machines, has robbed them of the artist's joy and glory in his labour. Partly it is sheer irreligion, sheer forgetfulness that, as Carlyle kept reiterating, all work, even the lowliest, is worship; that, as Paul put it to the slaves sick of their drab monotonous uninteresting life, it is God Himself we serve; that we too, wherever be our sphere, are His ministers no less than those who stand before His altars; and that it is an impudent profanity to offer Him less than our very best. Yet we keep doing it. Ruskin was once allowed

to climb up in a great cathedral to examine certain capitals, lost in the dark and dust of centuries, and found to his delight that the traceries there, which can never have been seen by human eye since they were finished and the scaffolding was taken down, were no less delicate and perfect than those in full sight of the staring congregation. Isn't it Mr. Grayson who has a pretty story of a village carpenter who kept adding touch to touch at part of a bit of furniture completely hidden? 'Why do you bother so?' they asked, 'no one will ever know.' 'I will know,' the man answered. And God too knows. And the fact that we can scamp work, that we pull ourselves yawningly through our working hours, that we drop our tools the moment that the whistle sounds, is clear proof that we are an irreligious age, who do not feel God's presence where we have to spend most of our life, in the kitchen or the office or the study or the yard, where for us religion, if we are ever to attain to it, must be worked out. Nor will we ever be religious in a great part of our mind and days till, as the Apocrypha puts it, each of us in his own station offers his work as a prayer, and does it as an act of worship, face to face with God, as be sure the Carpenter of Nazareth did, day by day, and hour by hour. Paul several times uses with marked disapproval a word translated 'disorderly.' But the papyri show, so scholars say, that it was the term in current use denoting an idle apprentice and the like. Laziness and half-heartedness in work are in the New Testament a sin.

And there is this too—is there not?—that for years and years Christ waited with His heart on fire to save the world, and sure that He could do it, waited till the young ones had grown up and the mother could be left with them; waited—and then James joined a strict religious order and that meant more delay—waited without a thought of vexed repining, content to spend Himself on the little things that God had laid upon Him; and not until these had all been put through did He feel free to turn to His tremendous dream; till then gave all the glory of His mind and soul and nature to what it seems so many others might have done, while the whole uneasy, sin-sick, desperate world waited for Him. You also, perhaps, have your visions, very fair and stately, and you fret and chafe because you are chained down to such an unimpressive life that does not seem to matter much, feel you are being lost, that God is not making anything like the most of you, that your eager faith and zeal are being allowed unaccountably to run to waste. You yearn for the mission field, where workers are so needed; and here are you longing to go, and, instead, you have to spend your days upon some invalid's fractious whims and fancies. You know you have it in you to cut out a career, but are condemned to some unexciting drudgery. Well, it is trying. Yet old Honest tells us that whenever he saw the print of His Lord's shoe, therein he coveted to set his own: and nothing more is being asked of you—how infinitely less—than Christ gave nearly all His days, the Christ who was so absolutely content with God's ordering of His life, that, as Browning has it—

> He even seeketh not to please God more
> (Which meaneth, otherwise) than as God please.
> For, as the poet puts it in another place,
> All service ranks the same to God, there is no last nor first.

It is not the amount of the offering, but the spirit of it, that is all-important. And, after all, one never knows which is the big life, which the small. It was a disappointed soul who, with his eager offer of service rejected, went back to his own house; yet, when our Lord next appeared in that countryside, the man's quiet daily witness, which he had thought so unimportant, was found to have told enormously. And it was not only when Christ climbed Calvary to die for us that He pleased God perfectly. But to Him, all the silent years, the one thing absolutely beautiful and glorious in His whole marvellous world was that life with its little duties, hidden away in some back street. For

> God works in the little as the great
> A perfect work, and glorious over all,
> Or in the stars that choir with joy elate,
> Or in the lichen spreading on the wall.

Further, the message of Christ, and the form in which He put it, become increasingly impressive when we remember that in essentials His age was quite curiously like our own. There was, for example, the same over-population, indeed vastly

more, with the difficulties and the ills, social and economic, that arise from that. Nothing is more striking in the background of the Gospels than the speed with which, at a moment's notice, a crowd gathers, leaping out of nowhere. Mark shows us very vividly how constantly our Lord lived in the heart of a constant press of jostling folk, eagerly struggling to get near Him; and even when He did manage to seize a moment's leisure, however remote the spot might be, hardly was He settled down than they were streaming after Him in mobs, pointing and shouting excitedly, 'Here He is! Here He is!' And with that He was in the heart of it again, the smells and the heat and babble, giving Himself to each new case with all His soul. Josephus tells us how incredibly large was the number of crofters drawing meagrely some kind of pinched existence from the soil, no foot of which was left uncultivated: and how continuous was the chain of endless towns with huge masses of poor creatures herded into the slums, and how innumerable were the villages, if you can give that name to townships in the very least of which he says that there were not a few thousands of souls. It was a teeming land, and the taxation was stupendous, and the pinch of things so sore that the people had grown soured and desperate, filling the country with a constant snarl and bickering of acute, raw discontent, which, let Rome stamp on it with its iron-shod heel how it might, till every spark seemed out, kept quickly winking itself back into a roaring fire again; they were so wholly engaged in the effort to make things just meet that they had no time for religion, pushed it from them pettishly, clamoured for something real and solid, something that did things, something that would meet their grievances, and right their wrongs, not put them vaguely off with future hopes and thin and insubstantial promises. Nazareth was no petty hamlet drowsing in its sleepy hollow, far from the madding crowd, and from the bitter problems of our age; but there too were the surge and the heave and the unrest of desperate hearts. As Sir George Adam Smith has eloquently pointed out, so near was it to the centre of things that 'the chief lesson which it teaches us is the possibility of a pure home and a spotless youth in the very face of the evil world.' In its alleys it had people angry and sullen and all on edge with patent wrongs, because they had no fair share in the world, and because, like a sickly plant in a slum window-box which never sees the sun, their life spent all its energy in keeping life alive, could never flower, knew nothing of the glory it should have; people who felt that only force or some revolutionary upheaval could meet the case.

And to-day is not the Church faced by a situation curiously similar? And are not the more ardent spirits giving themselves to the preaching of a social gospel, to an agonized endeavour to rouse those who name Christ's name to help in the upsetting and reforming of the whole environment in which the masses have to live? And who can wonder! For to exist in this distressful world unmoved by all the hopelessness and miseries in which so many of our fellows start, and spend and end their days, handicapped from their birth, and pursued by innumerable difficulties hour by hour, were to play the sorry part of the priest and the Levite, and to find oneself inevitably on the left hand, among those set there because, while personally pure, they never noticed as they rushed about their busy life, that they were in a world of hurt things crying for their help.

And yet—and yet—Christ, living in an age like ours, declared with emphasis that it is we ourselves who are the cause of the worst difficulties for ourselves and others, we ourselves who must be changed if there is ever to be a new world; and if we fail to put the stress there, we are preaching some new gospel, and not Christ's. For Him it would have been so easy to have won flocks of adherents had He preached what they desired, what seemed to them the things of first importance. But He would not, and they turned away disgusted, as from a mere dreamer mouthing words, and left Him quite alone. And we too must not, for the sake of winning popularity for Christ, allow ourselves to forget to cry, as He cried, that no economic change will solve the problem, and no revolution cleanse the world, that man does not live by bread alone, and that all hopes, however splendid in their daring, and however chivalrously championed, that do not end in personal holiness and the unselfishness of Christ in us, will fade in disillusionment and heartbreak and the old old problem be left unsolved.

Finally there is this to say—that the teaching

of Jesus Christ is not just words and guesses thrown into the air. It is a reading of life, His own life of these thirty unknown years: it is the fruit of His experience there in the home and streets of Nazareth: it is what He Himself had found in His own personal walk with God. It He is so sure that if we ask we shall receive, and if we seek shall find, it is because He Himself had asked so often and had never known God fail Him; if to Him worry seems a foolish thing and almost unbelievable, it is because day after day He had experienced that we are all surrounded by a grace that never sleeps, nor fails, but extricates us, in ways unimaginable, out of our most desperate plights, and can be safely trusted. And, surely, when the world is filled with gloomy readings of this life of ours, when men like Thomas Hardy see so little in it except grey, sunless days and starless nights, and even Shakespeare falls into a sour melancholy over all the mysteries that baffle and bewilder him, it is a glorious fact that the deepest mind, the clearest soul, the greatest human being this world ever saw, when He looked back over life as He knew it there in Nazareth, gives us a reading of it all so heartening, so gracious, so full of the splendour of God's love, so absolutely certain of it that the crowding difficulties, disappointments, heartbreaks of His public life never so much as shook His sunny faith, so very glorious that to this day men call it the good news, and faces clear, and hearts grow brave and cheerful at the merest echo of it.

A. J. GOSSIP.

The Boyhood of Jesus.

Luke ii. 43.—'The boy Jesus' (RV).

Luke ii. 51.—'He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.'

THE story of the boyhood and youth of Jesus is not written. The Evangelists bring Him to Nazareth; they set Him in the home there, where He grows up through childhood to manhood; but the life of those years is not recorded. Why not? Not, assuredly, because it was not thought worth telling, but because in one sense there was nothing to tell. That boyhood passed without any striking incident, and it passed in silence. He grew, as other boys grow, to strength and wisdom and grace, through commonplace years in which He spoke no word which was for any outside His own sphere, nor was concerned with aught save the immediate interests of His little world. But this in itself is a fact of the utmost significance: let us set it before us now.

It is to Nazareth that all the Christian ages have turned, to see there Jesus in His boyhood. And till recently these eyes have been strangely blinded by prejudice regarding this city of Galilee. It has been consistently described as a small and mean village, remote and obscure and of an evil reputation; whereas none of these descriptions seems to have been merited by it. The words of guileless folk are notoriously liable to misconstruction, and the simple exclamation of Nathanaël, the Israelite in whom was no guile, has suffered this fortune to the full: 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' He asked, with his mind full of the promise of the Son of David, and with a vision of the consummation of Israel's long hope. In this connection of thought it surprised him that any good could come from so unexpected a quarter; and upon the foundation of his simple wonder there has been built by ready imagination a Nazareth such as never was upon the Galilean hillside; a place of hovels, disreputable, and a leper among the communities of men.

Galilee has been greatly misrepresented, and most of all, Nazareth. Popular speech and, still more, literary references, may be relied upon in few things more certainly than in the choice between the words 'village' 'town' and 'city': these severally give the broad impression of a place which even the least accurate observer can hardly miss; and in the Gospels Nazareth is a city, not a village. We think of it now as a place of upwards of fifteen thousand inhabitants, retired rather than remote—indeed, advantageously central in Palestine. It lay where its modern decayed representative still lies, in a cup-shaped hollow of the southern hills of lower Galilee, where these slope down to the wide plain of Esdraelon.

No doubt its interests were rural and spiritual, the childish eyes of Christ opened upon all the scenes and labours of village life, upon all the movement and colour and fragrance of Nature. We know how all these reappear in His parables and give life and beauty to His teachings. And

yet Nazareth, though so quiet and retired, could be reached by the throb of the great world's movements. Galilee itself was seething with the hopes and fears of Jewish patriotism; the fire which burst out a few years later in the Jewish War and ended in the destruction of Jerusalem was already kindling. One at least of our Saviour's disciples had been a member of the Nationalist party. And apart from these political excitements, there would come to the little town tidings of the outer world of the East and West. The caravans from the East bound for Egypt and the West and back again passed within a few miles of the walls; rumours of the latest Parthian revolt, tidings of the coming and going of the Propraetors, or of the marriages and political intrigues of the Herods, could not fail to reach the Nazarene peasants. They mused with varying bias, according to their spiritual and moral insight, upon the relation of Israel with the powers of the world, and especially the great Empire of Rome. And all this lent its influence to the education of the Child Jesus.

1. Of the life Christ lived there we can say first of all that it was *a perfectly natural life*. He was a real child, a real youth, a real man. In one of the Apocryphal Gospels which have come down to us there is a curious description of the talk of the boy Jesus with the doctors in the Temple. It tells how one of the chief Rabbis asked Him, 'Hast Thou read books?' Jesus answered that He had read both books and things contained in books, and He explained to them the books of the law and the mysteries which are contained in the books of the prophets—things beyond the reach of any created mind. Then a certain astronomer who was present asked the Lord Jesus whether He had studied astronomy. The Lord Jesus answered and told him the number of the spheres and of the heavenly bodies, their aspect, their motion, direct and retrograde, and other things which human reason had never discovered. There was also among these philosophers one who was well skilled in treating of natural science, and he asked the Lord Jesus whether He had ever studied medicine. And He in reply explained to him physics and metaphysics, the powers and humours of the body, and the different kinds of constitution, and how the soul acted on the body, and other things such as no created intellect had ever reached. That highly coloured imaginary conversation, which reminds us of the inventiveness of unscrupulous reporters nowadays, stands in sharp contrast with the reticence and simplicity of St. Luke's account. There was nothing portentous about Him. Sin alone excepted, He was perfectly human. His manhood sprang out of a youth which sprang in its turn from a boyhood and a childhood, and His wisdom throughout corresponded with His years. All was most real, most natural, most unforced. By action and experience He gradually developed the vast potencies that were in Him, He gradually realized in the details and particulars that which from the first implicitly He possessed. Jesus did not stand still—He grew. Hallowing all the stages of our human progress, the Lord Incarnate, with the ripening of His years, 'increased in wisdom.'

He was a boy like other boys,
  And played and sported with the rest,
He had his troubles and his joys,
  And strove for mastery with the best.

He was a very boy, and had
  His little faults—like other boys;
But he was always gay and glad,
  And eager in his small employs.

With all the rest he went to school,
  But gave his lessons more concern,
And school to him was never dull,
  He had so keen a wish to learn.

He loved all birds and beasts and flowers,
  And in the hills spent happy days
Lying unseen in cunning bowers
  Where he could watch their curious ways.

He was great-hearted, tender, true,
  And brave as any boy could be,
And very gentle, for he knew
  That Love is God's own Chivalry.

He was a boy—like you—and you,—
  As full of jokes, as full of fun,
But always he was bravely true,
  And did no wrong to anyone.

And one thing I am sure about,—
  He never tumbled into sin,

But kept himself, within, without,
As God had made him, sweet and clean.[1]

2. It was *a life of obedience.* 'Under the law' is an expression used more than once by St. Paul with rererence to Christ's human life. He was discommoded in the very first moment of His sacred infancy by the imperious law of Augustus. Years later, when questioned as to the lawfulness of paying tribute to Cæsar, He distinctly bade His querists pay their dues and so keep the law. Voluntarily He placed Himself under civil law. He who made all true laws was the truest law keeper. So also He submitted Himself to the law of religion, the very religion He had come to abolish by fulfilling it in Himself. When eight days old He was circumcised; and in later years, He went out of His way to pay the ecclesiastical tax rather than offend. There was no boastful independence, no self-will, no defiant challenge even of ancient custom, which was so soon to pass away. This life under law is what men rebel against to-day. Everybody strives to be a master. The yoke is a hateful instrument which men are anxious to place in museums. Nobody cares to obey—all desire to command. But let us understand that the perfect Christian life is simply impossible to the undisciplined man. The free shoulders will always ache: he who wears the yoke 'finds rest.'

The one feature of Christ's education upon which the Word of God dwells is the subjection; all else is taken for granted—the industry and the piety and the beautiful example—and this only is dwelt upon. 'He was subject unto them'; 'He humbled himself,' St. Paul writes, as the characteristic of the whole of the earthly life, 'He humbled himself and became obedient.'

Now if this, standing by itself, should seem to anyone an inadequate or even unworthy representation, fixing the whole attention upon the gentler qualities, the less heroic virtues, it might be something to remember that these are just the features of our nature which least attract earthly admiration, and upon which consequently it is most needful to insist as necessary to perfection. But a fuller and deeper explanation is found in one remarkable saying of St. Paul—'Submit yourselves' 'one to another in the fear of God'—followed as it is by the application of the precept, not more to the inferior than to the superior in each one of life's relations, and suggesting this profound thought, that a mutual subordination is no contradiction in terms, but the truest wisdom, involving on the one side a ready obedience, but involving on the other side all that tenderness of feeling, all that respectfulness of consideration, and all that chivalry of protection which makes obedience itself gratitude, and places strength and weakness on a level with one another, as being heirs together of the grace of life. 'He was subject,' becomes therefore, being interpreted, He was courteous, He was reverent, He was generous, He was courageous, He loved Himself least; He practised in youth the grace of charity, He trod from His boyhood the way to the Cross.

¶ There is no part of the Roman Catholic discipline that appeals to me so much as their doctrine and life of obedience. Their habits of prayer and their vows of obedience take my heart very much. But then, as often as I hanker after those things for myself and for you, these lines of Keble's always come to my mind to correct me—

We need not bid, for cloistered cell,
Our neighbour and our work farewell,
Nor strive to wind ourselves too high
For sinful man beneath the sky;

The trivial round, the common task,
Will furnish all we ought to ask,—
Room to deny ourselves, a road
To bring us daily nearer God.

That is to say, we do not need to leave our own home to go and seek out some ecclesiastical superior to whom to submit and subject ourselves. We do not need to leave our own fireside for plenty of opportunities and duties and demands to take other people's ways of things and to give up our own way. Our Lord's subjection and submission were made perfect, and were thus made the pattern of our subjection and submission, just by His living day after day, for thirty years, in the same small house with His mother and His brothers and His sisters.[1]

[1] John Oxenham, '*Gentlemen—The King!*', 12.

[1] A. Whyte.

In the Midst.

Luke ii. 46.—'They found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors.'

'THEY found him . . . in the midst.' What is the midst? Is it geometrical or is it poetical, ideal? There is a midst that is only a centre. That is the meaning of the word geometrically in this instance. It is the point from which the circumference is equally distant at every point on its own line. But this is not the meaning of 'in the midst.' Now in the Book of Deuteronomy we read, 'And the Lord God shall raise up out of the midst of thee a prophet.' What is the meaning of the word 'midst' there? Were the people assembled in a circle, and was one man in the centre of the circle, and was the man to be the great Prophet that was to come? No. The prophet that was to come was to be the son of man, the son of all men, the child of every woman. That is the larger meaning of 'in the midst.' It is not a central point, but a point radiating, penetrating, and which could be what it is in the matter of influence only because it is 'in the midst.'

1. 'They found him . . . in the midst of the doctors.' Who were the doctors? Learned men, custodians of the literature of the Church, men of light and leading,—or so they ought to have been—men foremost in literary and critical repute. And they found Him—where? 'In the midst' of them, and there by right, there by simple sitting down—His position makes the centre. Where He is is the metropolis. Where He is the court is. Where He presents Himself all the geometry of creation bears down upon Him, converges upon Him, goes out from Him. He is above and within, and under and beyond all things. What a beautiful lesson might be drawn from this—Jesus 'in the midst' of the dying erudition. Jesus 'in the midst' of the living literature. Jesus 'in the midst' of the transition of ages; the old teachers going, the new teachers coming, and Jesus 'in the midst.' And He was hearing them and answering their questions, and they were drawn to Him, and never spoke to one another. How He always absorbed the occasion! How every other man fell off into perspective, and how He reigned and ruled, and made splendid every occasion. He went to dine with men, and He was 'in the midst' of them; He was the host and not the guest. The host felt himself sitting by permission and tolerance at his own table. There is no own table where Christ is. It is the Lord's table filled with sacramental emblems, loaded with types of sacrificial blood.

2. Now let us go with Him on another occasion, and hear Him speak. 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I.' Where? 'In the midst!' 'In the midst' of two men! Yes. 'In the midst' of three men! Yes. 'In the midst' of the universe, and 'in the midst' of the solitary man—always 'in the midst.' Some persons have rapidly generalized this text into the definition of a Church. It may be, and where it is, it is the very best definition. It may not be, and where it is not, it is the very crudest and shamefullest perversion of Divine intention. I have no right to separate myself from the Church of the living Christ, and make a little Church of my own somewhere. It is right for two of us to make a Church if there is no Church in the neighbourhood or elsewhere accessible; but let us have no amateur Church toying, Church making! Let us have no idea of a man taking what someone called a spoonful of brimstone, and going off and making a little perdition of his own; and let us have no conception that men are at liberty to be schismatics. We have a perfect right to be a Church if there are two of us, one the preacher and the other the hearer; but if there be a Church there, a full-hearted living Church, we ought to have very strong reasons for keeping out of it. And if we have strong reasons for keeping out of it, we ought not to be afraid of our reasons, we may sometimes have occasion to state them; and if the reasons are not through and through good, valid, Scriptural, Christlike, then our separation is schism, and we have no right to talk about 'where two or three are gathered together in His name.' Understand, therefore, that this is the definition of a Church, and that very much depends upon anterior meanings and perhaps unconscious and subtle motives. No, it all means that wherever there are human hearts, there may be a Christian Church, Christ 'in the midst.'

3. 'In the midst,' of the doctors we first found

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Him; 'in the midst' of the two or three met in His name we next found Him. Now listen—John xix. 18: 'where they crucified him, and two others with him, on either side one.' Might not the verse have ended there? Not with the rhetoric and rhythm of heaven's love. Syntheticically it would have been well enough; but the verse completes itself thus: 'And Jesus in the midst.' Hear it again; 'where'—Golgotha—'they crucified him'; 'where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one.' Stop! I cannot stop! Such a torrent must not be interrupted. It is the cascade of heaven's heart—'and Jesus in the midst.' Why, you just said that there was one on one side, and the other on the other. Why say, 'and Jesus in the midst?' Where else could He be, if there was one on one side and the other on the other? Is it not tautological? No; and if it were, love is not redundant, love keeps no weights and scales. Behold them now on Golgotha. They are crucifying three men, and there is one cross that absorbs the other two. Against that great cross of my Lord's agony I lean the little cross of my poor empty woe. Where did we find Him first? Among the learning of the Jews. Where second? In the nucleus of the Church. Where next? In the midst of the thieves. He could not be on one side. If you write your programme, and put Him first or last, He is in neither place, because He is in both places, because He is in the midst of the programme; He rules the music. The dance, if it be merriment, takes its cue from Him. The woe, if it be funereal, is but a small type of His infinite grief. 'Jesus in the midst.' Some men are born for a place. We see them one day, and we say, 'These men ought to live among the doctors.' That is right. He knows all about their great books, and He finds His place.

4. 'I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. . . . And I turned to see the voice.' But can you see a voice? Some voices. 'I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned; I saw seven golden candlesticks, and in the midst.' What? 'In the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man.' Why, we saw Him last on Golgotha. Certainly, and to righteousness Golgotha means heaven. Still 'in the midst.' 'In the midst' of seven? Yes. But will there be four on one side, and three on the other? No, there will not. Jesus is one of three, and the three are one, and the one is indivisible, and the three are triune. It is a mystery, and mystery laughs at numbers. This same John who saw Him in the midst of the thieves saw Him in the midst of the candlesticks. And more, He says He saw another great vision. 'I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne, . . . and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain. The same we found in the midst in the city, the same we found in the midst on the cross, the same in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, the same life, the same Saviour—where is He now? 'In the midst of the throne, and in the midst of the elders,' heaven's doctors, the centre and the glory of them all. You cannot dispossess Him. You cannot displace Him. He is Master, King of kings, Lord of lords.

Children's Questions.

Luke ii. 46.—'Asking them questions.'

HERE is our Lord, the King of children, who Himself, as He grows in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man, puts out all the beautiful gifts of a stainless childhood, and the one thing that we know about His childhood is that He not only heard but asked questions. And He asked these questions not about childish matters in the carpenter's shop, at home with His mother at Nazareth, but in the very heart of the Temple of His Father, about the holiest affairs, about His sacred Scriptures. He asked them in the face of the wisest doctors who sat in Moses' seat, whose authority He recognized and honoured, who spent their lives in brooding over the deep mysteries of the faith. He respected them, but He was not awed into silence by their solemn dignity. They did not hush up His eager inquiries because they were so learned, nor because matters of religion were beyond His rightful ken. It was just the opportunity He desired. He went there for it, He wanted to know about these things. He asked what He wanted just as children ask us. He broke in upon that ring of serious elders with the brilliant naïveté, with the rapid insight, that belong to innocence, with the courage

of unconscious simplicity, not going outside His humanity, but justifying it in its own natural capacities, and lifting them to higher power under the transfiguration of His own stainless purity, which could see God. He was a boy, and therefore He asked questions. That was His justification for asking them. He was engaged in His own proper office as a Son in His Father's house. He might well ask questions about God, for His Father's interests, His Father's welfare, His Father's honour, His Father's business were surely His as well. 'Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?'

Our Lord, then, lends His sanction to children's questions. And we, as we bend to face the relentless questionings of children, have ever to recall the Temple scene—the circle of the doctors buried in profound and absorbing study, poring over sacred records, noting every jot and tittle of the wonderful law, interchanging subtle suggestions, storing up transmitted wisdom, with a heavy weight of honour upon them and anxious problems pressing for solution. There they sit, furrowed with thought, loaded with meditation; the brows are knit, the head stoops over their scrolls, the eyes are dim with searching, the brain swoons under the weariness of toil, and suddenly an unknown boy is in their midst, clear-eyed, pure-hearted, fearless, challenging them with keen questions that thrust home like swords. Ah! we have had hard words enough for scribes and Rabbis, who overlaid the living Word with their tradition; but at least they did not frown down that strange inquiry, at least they had respect for the honour of childhood, at least they listened and had the honesty to recognize, with astonishment, the understanding He displayed. Are we as honest, as ready, as humble, as open-minded with our children when they ask us questions? Is childhood to us a sacred thing? It is Christ whom we must recognize in the souls of the children; Christ who puts aside all in them which is merely inquisitive and silly and impatient, and who stands there as He stood in the midst of the doctors, challenging us to face His innocence, His simplicity, His courage. How shall we meet Him?

1. First, by taking the questions seriously. We must begin by recognizing plainly that the child is within its rights in asking, even though it plunge into the midst of all the solemn problems which the doctors have been ever busy in discussing. Yes, even though to ask these questions it press into the very heart of the Temple of God. Take them seriously, for in those strange and sudden gleams which a child in its simplicity throws out on the deep things of the Spirit we are to watch for the incoming mind of the new generation, we are to note its instructive bent, to follow its cue, to track its tendencies, to learn its needs. What is it they spontaneously ask? By that we shall guess what is in the air, we shall forestall the intellectual cravings of the years that are to come. Such surprises they give us! They upset us; in our laziness, our pride, and our stiffness we try to put them off. 'Don't be silly,' we say; 'you must not talk like that, it's wrong.' And back creeps the chidden soul, repressed and alarmed, to brood in some corner by itself over the dark things that we have refused to clear up for it.

(1) A real answer whenever it is possible—that first. And then there are two qualifications. Obviously there are many things which the children will ask to which a real answer is for the moment impossible. Sometimes this will be when we ourselves know the real answer, but it is beyond their experience or comprehension. Now over some part, at least, of such ground the Bible authorizes us to use allegory or symbolism, or metaphor, or some very concrete type of the full truth. God Himself has recorded for us a sample of how to build up bit by bit the spiritual understanding. Take the Old Testament; there we can watch God educating Israel by degrees. There is a standard by which to learn the legitimate use of type and of design in education. People are apt to wonder why they have in an inspired Book such rough, elemental tales, carrying them back to such a remote and primitive past. Cannot we leave such things behind us? Nay, for here surely is our chart that we may see how God the great Father drew His children on from point to point, adapting His teaching to the stage attained, giving them first the earthly symbol and then the spiritual reality. So we may know how to repeat the lesson that we have learnt on the great stage of history to our own nurseries, where we, too, have to exercise that fatherly care over those who repeat in their own several persons the story of the race at large.

(2) And very often the children will ask questions to which we have no answers. What then? Well, let us plainly tell them so. There is nothing so perilous as giving answers which, later on, they must discover to mean nothing at all. So much of unbelief is due to shocks which have come from finding out that the positive information on the high things of God given in childhood had no basis, no certitude, no evidence. Perhaps the very parents who had supplied it in the easy amplitude of unquestioned authority are themselves forced, under later challenge, to confess their total ignorance. That is a recoil that ought never to be risked. Cannot a child take it from us quite naturally, quite simply, that we don't know? His trust in us will be infinitely increased if he feels that we are frank with him. Such a confession of our ignorance to him is a tribute to our respect for his intelligence. It proves to him that we are not trifling with his inquiries; we are taking him seriously. It is so right, so natural, so perfectly easy if we only have the candour to say it. 'Dear child, nobody knows that; I cannot tell you. We are all children here together, and have all to ask a great many questions which cannot be answered. You and I must wait, we shall both know some day.'

2. But we are not only to take the children's questions seriously, we are to take them home to ourselves. For not only is it an intellectual honesty that they challenge, but they play with all their sharpest shafts upon our moral consistency. 'Why do you do that?' 'Did you mean what you said?' So they are ever asking, either audibly or in silence. We are anxious enough about the scrutiny and judgment of our fellow-men and women, but close at our sides we forget the merciless eyes that observe every word and gesture. Those ruthless little ones! they have so few excuses for us, they never spare, they never overlook, they have no respect for our conventions and usages, they expect so much of us. They think that we, their elders and parents, are bound to do right; they cannot believe that we have infirmities and weak spots. Down, therefore, they come upon our lapses with their unerring judgment, with their unswerving demands. Our whole life falls under their scrutiny, and woe to us if there be in it anything hollow or false or unreal. They are bound to challenge it, are bound to see through it. And moodiness, uncertainty of temper, unsteadiness, they detect in an instant; and selfishness—they say very plain things about that; and lack of truth they fiercely resent, and the slightest hypocrisy or cant they loathe. Dare we face their incessant scrutiny, the fire of their questions? Grown-up men and women who are conscious of their own condescension to low standards will make allowance for us. Their houses are of glass, they cannot afford to throw stones; but the children—the judgment of the children upon us is untrammelled by any such timidities. Straight, firm, and clear, it issues from their simplicity.

There can be no severer proof to which our character can be put than a pure and guileless boy in our midst, asking questions. And if that boy were Jesus Himself, stainless, white, and radiant, if His eye fell upon us and looked us through and through with the searching flame of His purity, now, to-day, as we sit here in His Father's House, what would He see? What questions would He ask? We should know, indeed, what it was to say, 'We believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge.' We should fall on our knees and pray with new earnestness, 'We therefore pray Thee help Thy servants, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious blood.'

'Why?'

Luke ii. 48.—'Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?'

THE mother of Jesus is the speaker, and it is of Jesus that she asks her question. You remember how, on the way home from the Temple at Jerusalem, where they had gone to worship, they missed the Child Jesus from their company. On going back they found Him in the Temple, 'sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.' Then it was that His mother said unto him, 'Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?'

'Why hast thou thus dealt with us?' It is a puzzled question. The Boy, who had been an obedient child in her household, whom she had found always docile to her guidance, had suddenly

passed beyond her and done a thing which she could not understand. It seemed as if she had lost Him. Her tone is full of love, but there is something almost like jealousy about it. He has taken Himself into His own keeping, and this one act seems to foretell the time when He will take His whole life into His own hands, and leave her outside altogether. The time is past when she could hold Him as a babe upon her bosom. The time is prophesied already when He shall go in His solitude up to the cross, and leave His mother weeping at the foot. She is bidden to stand by and see her Son do His work and live His life in ways she cannot understand. No wonder that it is a clear, critical moment in her life. No wonder that her question still rings with the pain that she put into it. No wonder that when she went home, although He was still 'subject unto her,' her life with her Son was all changed, and she 'kept all these sayings in her heart.'

How is it that I sought Him? For He speaks
So little to me through the weeks and weeks:
Then waiteth—and whatever I shall say
That He will straight obey.

The neighbours say to me how He is fair.
It is as music wandered through His hair;
It is . . . and yet no beauty one should love:
He mourneth as a Dove.

He will fare forth. His story He must tell.
While underfoot I feel the Dragon swell.
I rise as Deborah, though I am dumb,
And bid His Kingdom come.[1]

Now this question of the mother of Jesus reveals an experience of the human heart which is very common, which is most common in the best hearts and in those who feel their responsibility the most.

1. The first and simplest case of the experience is that which comes nearest to the circumstances of our story. It comes in every childhood. It comes when a boy reaches the time at which he passes beyond the merely parental government which belonged to his earliest years. It comes with all assertion of individual character and purpose in a boy's life. A boy has had his career all identified with his home where he was cradled. What he was and did, he was and did as a member of that household. But by and by there comes some sudden outbreak of a personal energy. He shows some disposition, and attempts some task, distinctively his own. It is a puzzling moment alike for the child and for the father. The child is perplexed with pleasure which is almost pain to find himself for the first time doing an act which is genuinely his own. The father is filled with a pain which yet has pride and pleasure in it to see his boy doing something original, something which he never bade him do, something which perhaps he could not do himself. The real understanding of that moment, to both child and father, depends upon one thing—upon whether they can see in it the larger truth that this child is not merely the son of his father, but also the son of God. If they both understand that, then the child, as he undertakes his personal life, passes not into a looser but into a stronger responsibility. And the father is satisfied to see his first authority over his son grow less, because he cannot be jealous of God. It is a noble progress and expansion of life when the first independent venture of a young man on a career of his own is not the wilful claim of the prodigal: 'Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me,' but the reverent appeal of Jesus: 'Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?'

¶ Adolescence is characterized by the birth of a greater Self. During the earlier years of the period the youth feels his increased proportions, opportunities and possibilities. The possession of new and enlarged powers gives him a new realization of himself. . . . 'Back of the whole adolescent development, and central in it, is the birth of a new and larger spiritual consciousness.' This enlarged consciousness is also social, scientific, æsthetic and moral. The field of view being extended and the relation to others being changed and given greater moment, the youth experiences a clearer self-revelation, self-realization, self-assertion, and greater self-sufficiency. 'The quickened conscience, with its thirst for absolute righteousness; the quickened intellect with its thirst for absolute truth; the quickened æsthetic sense with its intuitions of a beauty that eye hath not seen and ear hath not heard; the quickened social sense, with its longing for eternal companionship—in short, the new meaningfulness and mystery

[1] Michael Field, *Mystic Trees*, 69.

of life'—this all tends to deepen and enlarge the conception of the self to such a degree that the period of adolescence may appropriately be designated the birth of a larger personal consciousness.[1]

2. Take another case. It is the case of the champion of the Faith, the man who counts it his work in life to maintain and protect the purity of the belief in Christ. It is a noble task for a man to accept. It is filled with anxiety. The faith for which the man cares is beset with many dangers. It costs him sleepless nights and weary days. He incurs dislike; he excites hostility by his eager zeal. To all this he is fully equal. The danger of many a stout champion of truth comes quite at the other end. There comes a time when God, as it were, takes back into His own keeping that faith over which He has bidden His disciples stand guard. The truth begins to show a vitality upon which the believer has not counted. It puts itself into new forms. It develops new associations. No wonder that he is troubled. No wonder that, unless he is a large and thoughtful man, thoroughly reverent of truth as well as thoroughly devoted to the truths which he has held, he grudges truth in some way the larger freedom which it is claiming for itself, and almost opposes its development.

3. Take another example. A good man has for years counted himself a champion of the often denied and insulted justice of God. He has been ready to maintain it everywhere. Against all weak representations of God as a Being all indulgence, he has asserted that God must punish wickedness. That truth he has supported, as he has conceived it, in its simplest, crudest form—physical, unending punishment. Suppose the day comes when that faith claims for itself a freer and more spiritual meaning; when men's souls become aware that in the world to come, as in this world, the punishment of sin must be bound up in sin itself; when not the agonies of hell but the degradation of the moral nature stands out as the dreadful thing. No wonder that at first the surprised believer is almost dismayed. His faith, over which he has stood guard so faithfully, seems to be slipping away from him. His faith seems to be playing him false. He is bewildered, as Mary was when Jesus for the first time began to show His personal will and ways. But by and by the time came when she rejoiced in it, no doubt. 'Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it,' she ordered the servants at the marriage in Cana. By that time she had learned to trust her Son far out of her own sight, to look to His own self-development with perfect confidence. And so the believer, and the champion of belief, comes in the course of time to rejoice when his belief outgrows him; when what he has to stand guard over is seen to be, not the special form in which a dogma has been conceived, but the spirit to which knowledge can come, and to which it must come always more spiritually and richly; not the truth, but truthfulness.

4. The same truth applies to the care for the world's reformation and improvement which different kinds of good men have. There are some men undertaking to reform the world who want to keep the whole plan in their own hands and never have its working outgo their wisdom. There are other reformers who believe themselves to be working in a great system which is far too large for them to comprehend, to which they can only give a helping touch at one point where it comes near their lives. The first kind of reformer believes that he understands it all, knows just how evil is to be eradicated, just how good is to be aroused and the world saved. The other reformer does not profess to know anything except that God is over all and that, under God, he has the privilege of helping this cause or that cause of righteousness in some special time of need, and at some special point which he can touch. The first is the reformer with a theory. The second is the reformer with a devotion. And it is evident what will be the different effect on these two men, if, as so often happens, the progress of humanity seems to declare a will of its own, does not advance as we expected it to advance, lags where we looked for it to hasten, or leaps to some great attainment where we expected it to proceed by slow degrees. The theoretical reformer, who thinks himself a master of human progress, and has imagined that he understood it all, is entirely lost as he sees the reform which he has thought could come to pass only in one way attaining its accom-

[1] S. B. Haslett, *The Pedagogical Bible School*, 168.

plishment in another, and going on its way far off in some new direction, leaving him behind. The devout reformer, who has considered himself the servant of human good, is glad enough to see that human good is far larger than he can understand, and is content if he can lend his little skill to some corner of its many wants, and be carried on with it, working for it, to unknown results.

5. There are men in the Church who begrudge the work she does, if it is not done by their own school of churchmen. What is the trouble with all these people? Is it not simple enough? They have the care of some one of God's children, some one of the causes which are born of Him, and which He loves, but they treat it as if it were not God's child, but only theirs. They are afraid if they see it growing strong in ways which they do not understand. When it dawns upon such a man that, behind all the care which he has for any of the great interests of righteousness and the use which God is making of him in its behalf, God Himself is holding that interest in the hollow of His hand, and with His infinite wisdom is preparing for it ways of success which His servant cannot begin to show, how calm and confident the servant's care for that good work must grow; how ready he must be to see the methods of the reform which he desires change before his eyes, to see it taken utterly out of his hands and yet work on for it with all his might and soul. Here is the salvation of honest partisanship. You believe that only your political party can save the country. But if you believe that the salvation of the country is a care of God, you will stand ever ready to help whatever new party God may seem to entrust with one period of that ever unfinished work. You and I believe that our Church has a great work to do for Christ's gospel in our country, but if we believe that Christ's gospel is something which is very near to the heart of God, we cannot possibly limit our sympathy to what our Church is doing. Even if our Church fails of its duty, we cannot possibly feel as if the gospel had failed. We shall have to rejoice, even while we work on with her, that God has other ways to do the work in which she does her part so feebly.

¶ There are so many professing Christians who think that to be in the right everybody must think exactly as they do; but the true Christian 'will whet and sharpen every instrument of goodness, though it be not cast in his own mould, or fashioned after his own pattern.' [1]

I lately talked with one who strove
To show that all my faith was dim,
That his alone, the road to Heaven;
And thus it was I answered him—

'Strike not the staff I hold away,
You cannot give me yours, dear friend;
Up the steep hill our paths are set
In different wise, to one sure end.

What though with eagle-glance upfixt
On heights beyond our mortal ken,
You tread the broad sure stones of faith
More firmly than do weaker men.

Snatch not away the glimmering light
The father holds, the son rejects,
Nor thrust your candle in their eyes,
And blind them—into narrow sects.

To each according to his strength:
But as we leave the plains below,
Let us carve out a wider stair,
A broader pathway through the snow.

And when upon the golden crest
We stand at last together, freed
From mists that gather round the base,
And clouds that but obscure our creed.

We shall perceive that though our steps
Have wandered wide apart, dear friend,
No pathway can be wholly wrong
That leads unto one perfect end.'[2]

Must.

Luke ii. 49.—'Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?'

THESE are the first recorded words spoken by our Saviour. Notice one word. It is the word 'must.' Christ often used it. Free from the compulsion of heredity and of circumstances, He yet recognized the moral constraints of life beyond any man. 'I must,' He said, 'I must, I must.' It is worth considering.

1. There is the irrepressible 'must' of *Love*. With Jesus love was the be-all and end-all—the

[1] A. M. B. Meakin, *Hannah More*, 257.
[2] Hamilton Aidé.

atmosphere in which other motives lived, and the basal ground on which they rested. The love soared upward to God, and it streamed outward to man. 'I must be about my Father's business,' He protested, with surprise that anything else should occur to anyone. 'Them also I must bring,' He said of the 'other sheep' over whom His tender and capacious heart yearned unappeasably.

Thus He stands before us, the pattern for the only obedience that is worth calling so, the obedience which would be pained and ill at ease unless it were doing the work of God. Religion is meant to make it a second nature, an instinct—a spontaneous, uncalculating, irrepressible desire—to be in fellowship with God, and to be doing His will. That is the meaning of our Christianity. There is no obedience in reluctant obedience; forced service is slavery, not service. Christianity is given for the specific purpose that it may bring us so into touch with Jesus Christ, that the mind which was in Him may be in us; and we too may be able to say, with a kind of wonder that people should have expected to find us in any other place, or doing anything else, 'Wist ye not that because I am a son, I must be about my Father's business?' As certainly as the sunflower follows the sun, so certainly will a man, animated by the mind that was in Jesus Christ, like Him find his very life's breath in doing the Father's will.

There have been many ardent lovers of God. There is a strange little book of devotion which has come to us from the England of the fourteenth century. *The Cloud of Unknowing,* it is called. The unnamed saint who penned it quivers with affection for the Eternal King. 'Desire only God,' he writes again and again. 'Press upon Him with longing love.' 'Look that nothing live in thy working mind but a naked intent stretching unto God.' The 'little word God' and the 'little word Love' are the only words, he thinks, that should regulate a Christian soul; any other than these splits the attention. The old Mystic has numerous disciples. But he and they kindle their torches at Christ's blazing altar; and not one of them is such a lover of God as Christ is. And there have been many strong lovers of men. They have prayed for their fellows, have wept over them, have been willing even to die for their advantage. Their presence warms the world. It helps us to believe that our earth, with all its dreary noises, is still among the stars. But Christ's is the transcendent love for man. It is saving in the deepest sense. It is persevering, lingering over us in spite of repulse. It is holy in its essence, and it is holy in its effects. The sheep whom Jesus gathers from a hundred folds into His one flock are washed and sanctified and justified by the love that has no peer.

¶ Love kindles and calls forth love. 'We count that,' says John of Wessel, 'to be the most loveable which we know to be the most loving.' The love of Christ has achieved the greatest things, and hence must produce the most powerful effects; it has displayed the greatest devotedness, and consequently must possess the strongest attractive power.[1]

2. There is the unanswerable 'must' of *Duty.* 'I must work the works of him that sent me' (John ix. 4), Christ said; and love remains preeminent, but the note of obedience and of stringency is added. 'He must needs go through Samaria' (John iv. 4), the 'blessed bosom-friend' reports of Him; and love, as always, is the impelling stimulus, but we have a new vision of the determination with which its quest is prosecuted. The imperative of duty prescribed Christ's desires and decreed His energies. And it is ever and everywhere best that the sovereign imperative should hold the reins and wield the sceptre.

See how the 'must' of duty is linked to the 'must' of love. Duty and love; duty and necessity springing out of love, not fear; all the authority of Divine sovereignty flowing from the consciousness of the Divine Fatherhood. The greater the love the stronger the law. Far stricter, indeed, are the obligations and requirements of love than those of mere law can ever be. No one can ever say that Jesus lessened the weight of moral obligation, though, paradoxically enough, by increasing the weight He lessened the burden. All the Mosaic statutes put together are not so exacting as the golden rule; but the latter was made possible by changing the motive from fear to love. There is simply no extremity of service and sacrifice to which the love of God will not and does not inspire. It is the sense of duty owed to

[1] Dora Greenwell, *The Covenant of Life,* 47.

a loving God that truly schools the heart to cry 'I must.'

It is a matter of common surprise that men and women who, as the callous world thinks, have been weak enough to become religious, who were formerly cold, calculating, hard-headed people of business and have yielded to inexplicable emotion, nevertheless become thereafter so frequently far stronger in purpose, far more daring and far more determined than in all their previous life and experience. They have been melted, broken; they have become as wax, or as water—because of a realization that God is love; that He is a Father not in name only but in reality; that with Him is plentiful forgiveness and redemption. And lo! the old frigid, cast-iron, unemotional, pitiless persistence has gone; but when men looked to find a wavering will, they were amazed. The will now was high and strong and forceful as never before. For the God they have come to love they would do a thousandfold more than for the self they used to love, or the society they used to fear. To-day no duty is too irksome, or too dangerous, or too disagreeable, for them to see it through. The Father speaks, and the soul replies, 'I must.' That is the lesson that Kipling thought worth emphasizing in the ballad called 'Mulholland's Contract.' The man in charge of the lower deck of the cattle steamer offers for gratitude to God for His saving mercy to do what God will have him do. And he comes to see that it is God's will that he should go back whence he came and preach the gospel to his vicious comrades on the cattle-boats.

I didn't want to do it, for I knew what I should get,
An' I wanted to preach Religion, handsome an' out of the wet,
But the Word of the Lord were lain on me, an' I done what I was set.

3. There is the sour-sweet 'must' of *Sacrifice*. In front Christ saw the Hill of Reproach, the malefactor's scaffold, the Cross outside the gate. 'The Son of man must be lifted up' (John iii. 14), He told Nicodemus when His ministry began. He 'must suffer many things, and be killed' (Mark viii. 31), He kept repeating to Peter and John and their companions, as His ministry marched steadily to its midnight and noonday close. Infinite solemnity and agonizing sorrow are in this 'must'; but even so, Jesus clasps it to His heart. He cannot, He will not, exchange it for anything softer or more bloodless.

I will complain, yet praise;
I will bewail, approve;
And all my sour-sweet days
I will lament and love—

that is the song of Christ's dedicated soul.

'Must' is a hard word. It may express an unwelcome necessity. Was this necessity *overwelcome?* When He said: 'The Son of man must be lifted up,' was He shrinking, or reluctantly submitting? Ah, no! He must die because He would save, and He would save because He loved. His filial obedience to God coincided with His pity for men: and not merely in obedience to the requirements of the Divine righteousness, but in compassion for the necessities of sinners, necessity was laid upon Him.

4. There is the overcoming 'must' of *Salvation*. Not in vain is Christ's libation of love and duty and sacrifice poured out. 'The third day the Son of man must rise again' (Mark viii. 31)—it was His victorious pronouncement and prophecy; and in His resurrection all good things are contained. His zeal Godward and manward has its fullest scope, now that on the Throne He is High Priest and King. Or we narrow the salvation to our individual selves. 'To-day I must abide at thy house' (Luke xix. 5)—there is His 'must' for each one. Not for a single night, as it had to be long ago; and not in humiliation, as when He was hastening to reap the evil harvests we had sown; but for all our days and nights, and in all His heavenly powers, He abides in the house of our being. It is the seal of pardon, and the secret of holiness, and the source of growth, on and on, up and up, from grace to glory. We live, yet not we; Christ lives in us; and we do no more than trust Him every hour and every moment.

Ah! Sacred Heart of Jesus, Flame divine,
Ardent with great desire,
My hope is set upon that love of Thine,
Deep well of Fire.

I cannot live alone another hour;
Jesu, be Thou my life!

I have not power to strive; be Thou my Power
In every strife!

I can do nothing—hope, nor love, nor fear,
But only fail and fall.
Be Thou my soul and self, O Jesu dear,
My God and all! [1]

5. There is the joyful 'must' of *Harvest Home*. Far afield Christ's vision goes out into the dim, waste places, where on the dark mountains the straying sheep are torn and frightened and starving. Far ahead in the future His glance travels, and how magnificent and how rebuking to our petty narrowness the great word is. 'There shall be one flock' (not fold); and they shall be one, not because they are within the bounds of any visible 'fold,' but because they are gathered round the one Shepherd, and in their common relation to Him are knit together in unity. 'Them also I must bring'—that is not merely a necessity rooted in the nature of God and the wants of men. It is not merely a necessity springing from Christ's filial obedience and sense of a mission; it is a 'must' of destiny, a 'must' which recognizes the sure results of His passion; a 'must' which implies the power of the Cross to be the reconciliation of the world. And so for all pessimistic thoughts to-day, or at any time, and when Christian men's hearts may be trembling for the Ark of God—although, perhaps, there may be little reason for the tremor—and in the face of all blatant antagonisms and of proud Goliaths despising the 'foolishness of preaching,' we fall back upon Christ's great 'must.' It is written in the councils of Heaven more unchangeably than the heavens; it is guaranteed by the power of the Cross; it is certain, by the eternal life of the crucified Saviour, that He will one day be the King of humanity, and must bring His wandering sheep to couch in peace, one flock round one Shepherd.

Soon shall the slumbering Morn awake,
From wandering Stars of Error freed,
When Christ the Bread of Heaven shall break
For Saints that own a common Creed.

The Walls that fence His Flocks apart
Shall crack and crumble in Decay,
And every Tongue and every Heart
Shall welcome in the new-born Day.

Then shall His glorious Church rejoice
His Word of Promise to recall,—
One sheltering fold, one Shepherd's voice,
One God and Father over all! [1]

[1] R. H. Benson, *Poems*, 28.

His Work and Ours.

Luke ii. 49.—'Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?'

John ix. 4.—'I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day.'

John xvii. 4.—'I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.'

FROM no lips but those of Jesus could these three sentences fall. In no life lower than His could they have fullest appreciation. He spoke the first sentence at the age of twelve years; the second in the midst of His life, when a blind man, representing humanity, stood before Him to await His blessing, He Himself having just confronted the world's hatred; the third at the close of His life, as the cross was being raised, and He was realizing His sacrifice. His life began in the Temple at a period when ordinarily youth does not care to cross its courts. His devotion to duty had an intensity all its own, and with a triumphant 'It is finished' He laid down His labour and His life together.

But though unworthy of Him we are not unlike Him. He is not ashamed to call us brethren. He does not disdain to give us the name He bears. There is in Him a Trinity in unity. He is our Saviour, Example, and Lord. We who are saved by His cross must tread in His footprints, and be governed by His will. His cross, towards Him, is our atonement; towards us, our crucifixion. That which is true in Him is true in us.

1. 'Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?' That is the text of childhood. It is the language of the boy Jesus. It gives a clue to the purpose and significance of His life, and of ours. It is well to enter the temple at an early period. Life cannot too soon begin with God. It is the devil's logic which would permit children as a necessity to sow wild oats, and reap a harvest of agonizing repentance, rather than prevent the suffering by preventing the sin. There

[1] Oliver Wendell Holmes.

are permanent ineradicable effects of sin. Wrong-doing of the past is in us still. As raindrops that ages agone fell on soft sand are now marked on solid rock; as molten metal once cooled takes shapes that only re-melting can change; so the consequences of sin are in our constitutions, in our habits, in our prejudices, in our passions, in our fears, in our hopes, in our anticipations. They are in us now. They will be with us in the hour of death and in the day of judgment, for ever and ever unless forgiven. Unless forgiven? Yes, and when forgiven. Hence the importance—vital, solemn, infinite importance—of our children beginning life with God. A child must know both good and evil. If rightly trained it cannot know them too early. Not what they are, but that they are. Otherwise the child will have demons' temptations, without an angel's innocence.

¶ Canon J. M. Wilson, in one of his *Essays and Addresses,* has some impressive words on sins of boyhood. 'In so far,' he says, 'as sin is in human nature, it is necessary to give boys some fresh power to cope with it. . . . My own personal conviction is that morality cannot become religious—that is, be penetrated with the love of duty, and so secured—without the sense of service of a Divine Master.'

2. 'I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.' That is the text of manhood and womanhood. It is the language of the manhood of Jesus. Intensity marked His devotion, best describes His labours. His teaching grew out of the occasion. He pondered deeply on God's world and God's will. He revealed the sacredness of God's world, the infinite blessedness of God's will. All that concerned the Temple was His Father's business. Every suffering man, blind or deaf, halt or maimed, was in the hands of God. Do not curse what God has not cursed. You live in God's world. To call it the devil's world, or a waste howling wilderness, is pious blasphemy. The world has always been going bad. Every period of literature looks back to a golden age. The golden age men put in the distant past or the distant future. Manhood looks for it as gone in youth, or to come in age. None look for it in the present. Christ said, 'The kingdom of God is within you.' 'Now is the accepted time.' Youth has its hope, manhood its work. The gospel has taken the word 'duty' and baptized it with the sacred name 'privilege.' Leave no work undone, no prayer unsaid, no profession unsustained. Seek mainly 'duty's iron crown.'

3. 'I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.' That is the text of old age. It is the language of the age of Jesus. Ordinarily speaking, He knew no age. But this is His review. Youth is for hope and dreaming; manhood and womanhood for work and endurance; age for memory and review, recollection and revision. How prominent is the personality! How fearless the tone—the night cometh, I have no fear. I have finished the work. In the manhood period the ideal of youth was buried. As age viewed life, the finished work, and more or less faithful performance, stood out to view. But the identity remained—I have not another master. I am not another person. Mine is not another's business. None can take my responsibility. I have finished. Now I will wait; there is something beyond.

The work remained, the personality remained, and some measure of success. The larger measure lay in the future, ready to be revealed in God's good time. The success we see is often not worth seeing, as they have ere this learned to whom death has opened the long-closed gate to the City of God. They have not taken the hand of the grim shadow, to be led through the darkness men call death. They have taken the hand of the Angel of Death; they are led through the deepening light, into the meridian glory of the Divine presence. Death is God's minister, and he has come to their release. In another sense is it true of them, 'though they walk through the valley, they fear no evil, for God is with them.' They have gone from sight, but not from memory. They are dead, but not destroyed. They were faithful, even unto death. They have 'finished the work God gave them to do,' and now in other, and better, and brighter worlds, they have 'gone about their Father's business.'

¶ That is a great and significant word of Victor Hugo: 'When I go down to the grave I must say like so many others, "I have finished my day's work." But I cannot say, "I have finished my life." My day's work will begin the next morning. The tomb is not a blind alley. It is a

thoroughfare. It closes in the twilight to open in the dawn.'

The Great and the Greater.

Luke iii. 1, 2.—'Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judæa, and Herod being Tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituræa and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the Tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.'

1. THERE was nothing further from St. Luke's mind, when he penned these sentences, than the idea of using the dangerous weapon of irony. Yet as we read his words now we cannot but see how much of ironical history he has imported into them. You must read the sentences in a tone befitting their dignity. Remember that you are speaking of empires, states, principalities. Give them their due. Honour the great ones of the earth. You will find no difficulty in treating with respect the name of Tiberius Cæsar and the imposing sovereignty of Rome. But you must treat with no less respect the petty dignities that divide Syria. Omit no act of homage, and if you can add flattery it will be welcome. Punctilio is the breath of life to minor dignities. And when you come to Jerusalem and the high priests there, you are indeed in an exalted presence. One high priest would have been impressive enough. But here there are two. What a list of eminent people and majestic dignities from Rome to Jerusalem! And here is the irony—unconscious but withering—all this is but stage scenery and setting. The really big thing is what follows, bigger than anything you could find in empire, state, or synagogue, although you searched with microscopic eye from Rome to Jerusalem. 'The word of God came to John in the wilderness.'

¶ If you were asked broadly to describe the Africa of to-day, how would you set about the task? You might describe the shape of the huge peninsular continent, and tell how the map had been filled in by the daring enterprise of many explorers. You would speak of Africa's primitive races and religions, and you would not forget to indicate its many products. An account of the Powers that have conquered and colonized large portions of it, and the manner in which they did it, would fill a long and tragic chapter. And you would bring your review to an end by offering some comments on problems of economic expansion, and hazarding some speculations on the future of the negro race. And you would have covered a very wide field. But when you had told all that, you would have utterly failed to convey a remotely adequate idea of the Africa of to-day. The significance of Africa would become plain only when you added a footnote: 'And the word of God came' to a man called David Livingstone, and he went forth as explorer and evangelist to open up the dark continent. For the time being he broke the power of the slave-traffic. He won the hearts of peoples whose language, whose very name, had hitherto been unknown. He let in the light of a new day on a darkness deeper than was ever seen in the shade of an African forest. He brought spiritual power and hope to Africa. And though the work he began has seen many reverses, though Africa has witnessed since his day more than one unspeakable tragedy, not born of its own soil, but thrust upon it by a presumably civilized Europe, still he and those who followed him gave a soul to Africa which can never leave it again, and have brought the Kingdom of Heaven nigh.

How would you describe that country which forms so great a part of another continent—I mean the land of China? Its mysterious and inscrutable people, its ancient civilization, its many dynasties, its age-long self-containment, and its exclusive pride would all be noted. You would not forget its enormous natural resources, and you would become engrossed in telling of the remarkable development of modern days through the impact of the West. The turbulence of revolution, the astounding transformation of the political outlook. . . . All this you can trace with facile pen. But half the story will still remain untold. Surely you will add a postscript containing the unobtrusive but salient fact that more than a hundred years ago 'the word of God came' to a man, Robert Morison. That man, under stress of that word, sailed for China, failed for long to secure effective entrance, and waited ten years before he could count a single convert to his faith. But although the *Encyclopædia Britannica* can afford only six inches of space for the biography of that man, he, more than anybody else,

laid the basis of the modern revolution, created, by his message, the instinct of reform and the hope of a better future, and brought the throb of a spiritual life to a people set in self-complacency. The China of to-day and the China that shall be will be absolutely inexplicable to the historian, apart from the word of God which was in that man and all who followed him.[1]

2. We can measure the contempt which would be felt for such a man as John by the scorn which still rings in Pilate's voice, when, in answer to our Blessed Lord's question, he exclaims, 'Am I a Jew?' We remember how, in after-times, tradition has it that two of our Lord's brethren, as they were called, were brought before Domitian, as descendants from David, and were dismissed, for their poverty and insignificance, as incapable of being claimants to the throne. Jewish religion, as expressed in its decadent representatives, had opportunity afterwards of expressing what they thought of John; and a Herod killed him. And yet here with John in the desert, and not there with the great ones of the earth, was the word of power and the centre of interest for the world's progress at the time.

It is a familiar experience. We know it, and chronicle it in many of our proverbs and sayings: 'It is the unexpected that happens.' 'It is the triumph of the unknown.' 'The last shall be first, and the first last.' 'Many are called, but few are chosen.' 'Many join in the procession, few are inspired.' But we do not always go on to see the reason—that where the golden seam of God's providence and work has disappeared, there remain only bare rock and useless toil, and that prosperity and greatness and power are transferred to surroundings however humble, to instruments however weak, if God's word be there in the fullness of its riches.

3. But how did it strike St. Luke and his contemporaries? What was it that gave John's appearance in the wilderness such a significance for them? It was the revival in Israel of the prophetic office after a cessation of nearly four hundred years. From the time of Samuel to that of Malachi, some seven hundred years, Israel had scarcely ever been without the voice of a prophet to bring God's message to the nation; then, for nearly four hundred years, God seemed to have withdrawn Himself from His people. Their later prophets, Isaiah and Malachi, for example, had, however, foretold the coming of a great prophet to prepare for the advent of the Messiah and the regeneration of Israel. When, therefore, John appeared with his stirring call to repentance, and his symbolic baptism, the nation was thrilled at the revival once more of the prophetic office which was to herald the coming of the Messiah. It is difficult for us to realize all that this meant to a proud people groaning under the oppression of a foreign yoke, but buoyed up by the hope of a promised deliverer. The prophet had appeared, the Messiah might be expected!

What is a prophet? We read in 1 Sam. ix. 9 that the prophet was first called a 'Seer,' a man who had visions, in which he learned God's will that he might teach it to others. Hence he was also known as a 'man of God.' The Creed tells us that the Holy Ghost spake by the prophets, that is, they were inspired; and towards the close of the last book of the Bible we are told that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy, that is, the bearing witness to Jesus (Rev. xix. 10). What we need to-day is prophets, men of spiritual vision, who can interpret what they see to others, and bring us messages from God. Every great religious movement has had its prophets, the last three or four generations have witnessed two such movements, when men's hearts were stirred and men's lives were changed by the message brought them by these prophets. What can we do? We can at least pray earnestly for another such outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and in our little spheres strive to show forth the testimony of Jesus, which is (in us) the spirit of prophecy.

4. But John was more than a prophet; he was the immediate forerunner and herald of the King. The New Testament itself proves incontestably that the expectation of the Messianic King was one of the principal features of the deep and hidden piety of the land, while Messianic hopes of a totally different order, crude and earthly, were widely diffused among the people. At all events, in the Jewish mind there was latent a whole system of Messianic ideas, which only a hint was required to awaken into activity.

[1] A. Connell, *The Endless Quest*, 212.

It was to this that John appealed when he cried, 'The kingdom of God is at hand.' But his most effective word was the hint that, not only the kingdom, but the King was coming. His favourite way of characterizing himself was as the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord.' In the East, when a king was making a progress through any part of his dominions, a herald preceded him, to announce his approach and to clear the way. If no road existed, one had to be made, valleys being filled up and even mountains and hills levelled for the purpose. Every obstacle, in short, had to be removed, and the hearts of men prepared for the king's reception. Such was the office which John claimed to fill in the programme of the Messianic King.

¶ Have you ever visualized Isaiah's simile, 'The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God'? I had thought, and I believe most people think, of some neglected and sandy waste, something like the Sahara, perhaps overgrown with scrub. But the force of the illustration becomes ten times stronger when you realize what the word desert and wilderness can mean in these Judæan hills. The hyperbole is terrific; the voice echoing through savage defiles and vast spaces of immeasurable waste—unanswered, unheard: the making of a highway out of these blind paths and precipitous descents where there is scarcely foothold for a goat—the miracle of the conversion of this place to make the crooked straight, and the rough places plain.[1]

Thine, Baptist, was the cry,
In ages long gone by,
Heard in clear accents by the Prophet's ear;
As if 'twere thine to wait,
And with imperial state
Herald some Eastern monarch's proud career;
Who thus might march his host in full array,
And speed through trackless wilds his unresisted way.

But other task hadst thou
Than lofty hills to bow,
Make straight the crooked, the rough places plain:
Thine was the harder part
To smooth the human heart,
The wilderness where sin had fixed his reign;
To make deceit his mazy wiles forego,
Bring down high vaulting pride, and lay ambition low.

Such, Baptist, was thy care,
That no objection there
Might check the progress of the King of kings;
But that a clear highway,
Might welcome the array,
Of Heavenly graces which His Presence brings;
And where Repentance had prepared the road,
There Faith might enter in, and Love to man and God.[1]

[1] D. Maxwell, *A Painter in Palestine*, 112.

Redemption by the Word.

Luke iii. 2, 3.—'The word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.'

As often as the word of God comes, a new epoch begins. It comes into a world where temporal power and spiritual darkness hold a proud dominance. It is met by the scornful word, the hostile blow, the crucifying cross. But the word of God comes always with the one purpose. It comes to redeem and to deliver men from the bondages of the spirit, the soul, and the body. As the word enters men's hearts, as it is translated into power and action, the dominion of evil is broken. Despotisms pass away. Tyrannies are cast down from their throne. The word of God grows and prevails. A new epoch in the Kingdom of God has begun. Look at this truth in the three large spheres of its action: first, the coming of the word in the redeeming of the world; second, the coming of the word in the redeeming of the age; third, the coming of the word in the redeeming of the soul.

1. First, *in the redeeming of the world.*—The master-truth of the Christian gospel is that God is redeeming humanity to Himself and His obedience. The history of that redemption is engrossed in the most solemn and most enduring of all literatures. The constant factor in that history has been the coming of a word of God which has been the vital force of every advance. The word

[1] Richard Mant.

of God comes to Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees, and he leaves his home to be God's minister in the redemption of men from the faith and worship of gods that pass as the stars pale in the morning light. He begins a new epoch in the kingdom of God. It comes to Moses in the solitude of Horeb, and he comes forth to redeem Israel from their bondage of body and soul, and to write a new volume of God's ways with men. It comes to Samuel in the silence of the Temple, and he is inspired to quicken Israel to new hope, to break the yoke of their oppressors, and to set God's people free. So the word of God comes to Amos, and to Hosea, and to Isaiah, as the shadows are growing long on God's wilful people, to call them to a redemption by returning and resting in God. It comes to Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and other prophets of the Exile, when night has fallen, with the same message and purpose of redemption. In this long succession John the Baptist is the last and noblest prophet, and his eyes beheld the breaking of the dawn in the dayspring from on high. Then came the consummating Word of God—in Christ Incarnate. 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.' As Jesus went up and down the land in the shining glory of His holiness, and as His voice rose and fell on the soft air of Galilee, and its pleading was heard in the synagogue and in the upper room, men knew that the Word of God had come. All history testifies that the completing epoch in the history of redemption had begun.

How, then, is this world to be redeemed? It shall be redeemed, as in days past, by the coming of the Word. This is the light to men's feet and the lamp to their path. This is the incorruptible seed of the Kingdom. This is the quick and powerful sword of the Spirit. As it is spoken, as it falls upon men's ears, whether they live in the midst of the old and corrupt civilizations, or whether they are to be found still under the darkness and ignorance of heathenism, whether they have become callous to every high ideal, or whether they are animated by a spirit of rebellion against purity and truth, it quenches men's spiritual vision, it rouses them to a new hope in God, and it redeems them from their captivities. It casts down the powers and principalities of evil from their throne. It breaks all oppression. It chastises all tyranny. Every Tiberius and Pilate, every Annas and Caiaphas, is brought low. The world has been redeemed only by the coming of the Word.

God has other Words for other worlds,
But for this world the Word of God is Christ.[1]

Revelation of the Father's glory,
Son of God most high—
Lo! Thou comest as a man to suffer—
As a man to die!

And we look upon Thy perfect Manhood—
Look until we see,
How the wondrous fulness of the Father
Surely filleth Thee;

And we know Thee, tender Man of Sorrows—
In Thy lowliness,
Walking up and down earth's ways among us,
Strong to help and bless—

For the voice of God through Thee is speaking,
And the Life divine,
Hidden in Himself through all the ages,
Is revealed in Thine!

Thou art such a Word as our dim vision
Clearly may receive;
Eyes that could not look upon the Father,
See Thee and believe;

Hearts that could not reach Him in the heavens,
In Thy Manhood read
His desire toward them, and within Thee
Find their Life indeed![2]

2. Second, *in the redeeming of the age.*—The wide sweep of this truth is seen in the redeeming of the world. Its certainty is as evident in the redeeming of the age. Every generation has its own peculiar perils and problems. Many of the questions which vexed our fathers have answered themselves. Perplexities unknown in the last century trouble our hearts. Every age needs a redemption of its own, and that redemption is wrought out through the coming of the word. This truth can be illustrated from every page of Christian history. Recall the Apostle Paul contending with that circumcision heresy which would have strangled the infant

[1] H. E. H. King, *The Disciples*, 112.
[2] E. H. Divall, *A Believer's Songs*, 93.

Church in its cradle; Athanasius, confronting that Unitarian conception of Jesus which deprives Him of His Godhead; Augustine dealing with the spawn of licentious doctrines which attempted to corrupt Christian morality; Luther facing the subtle and deadly wrong of a Romanism which forbids men to go right into the presence of God and to receive from Him alone the forgiveness of their sins; Knox establishing the religious liberty and social well-being of Scotland; Wesley rescuing the masses of England from their irreligious stupor; Carey arousing Christian men from their apathy towards the heathen; Chalmers quickening the faith of his countrymen that they might cast off the chill and formality of legalism. With what weapon did these servants of Christ redeem their age? With the Word of God. By some word which had burned its truth into their own hearts they subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, and redeemed their age.

We need to realize again that man does not live by bread alone. We require a fresh vision of the unseen and eternal, a deeper sense of brotherhood, a keener sympathy between employer and employed, a nobler passion for social justice, so that the coarse lusts of greed and envy and the love of ease and selfish pleasure shall be purged out of all our souls. That is the redemption required by our age, and it can be attained only by the coming of the Word. When some word of God about Himself and His righteousness, about the human soul and its true life, about the meaning of the word both to God and to man, and about Christ and His love and cross, becomes power within the heart, then the old oppressions shall pass away, the age-long tyrannies shall be cast down, and a new era of justice and truth shall be ushered in. Then —not till then!

3. Third, *in the redeeming of the soul.*—Here the truth narrows down to a personal issue. Both the redeeming of the world and the redeeming of the age are dependent on the redeeming of the soul. We are redeemed one by one. The life in Christ is always a thing of 'Thou and me.' Christ's message, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,' is always spoken to a single soul. The word must first be a seed in the heart of the individual man before it can bring forth the white flower of a blameless life and the red passion fruit of service and sacrifice. The word must first be a fire in the bones before it can become power on the lips and righteousness in the life. So the word came to John. It was heard in his protest against the wrongs of the age and his pleading for repentance, but the word came to him when he was a child, in his father's home. It came again as he fled into the wilderness in the anguish of his spirit. Its first redemption was that of his own soul.

There is an hour when the word of God falls upon the ear like the pealing of a bell in the midnight silence. There are moments in which the soul knows that God has spoken. The word comes to each of us in a different way. To a little child it comes in the knowledge of a pure personality in whom the word is once more made flesh. To an unstained youth, wistful for God's blessing, it is heard in the appeal of a father's prayers. To a young man whose steps have begun to wander, it comes in some haunting sentence of rebuke. To a man whose past life has robbed him of peace, it comes as a message of that love that will not let him go. To another, who has been keeping God out of his life and has been desecrating his soul by earthly passions, it comes with the cry, 'Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead.' As the word is responded to the powers of evil within are cast down, the dominion of evil habit and self-indulgent worldliness is broken, and the soul is redeemed and set free to serve the living God.

¶ It is thus with many men for all that belongs to the higher life. Sometimes, alone in the wide plain at the hour of twilight, they fix their eyes on the fading lights of the horizon, and on the evening breeze comes to them another breath, more distant, fainter, and almost heavenly, awaking in them a nostalgia for the world beyond and for holiness. But the darkness falls, they must go back to their homes; they shake off their reverie; and it often happens that to the very end of life this is their only glimpse of the Divine; a few sighs, a few thrills, a few inarticulate murmurs—this sums up all our efforts to attain to the sovereign good.

Yet the instinct for love and for the Divine is only slumbering. At the sight of beauty love always awakes; at the appeal of holiness the Divine witness within us at once responds; and so

we see, streaming from all points of the horizon to gather around those who preach in the name of the inward voice, long processions of souls athirst for the ideal. The human heart so naturally yearns to offer itself up that we have only to meet along our pathway someone who, doubting neither himself nor us, demands it without reserve, and we yield it to him at once. Reason may understand a partial gift, a transient devotion; the heart knows only the entire sacrifice, and, like the lover to his beloved, it says to its vanquisher, 'Thine alone and forever.'[1]

With brain o'erworn, with heart a summer clod,
With eye so practised in each form around,—
And all forms mean—to glance above the ground
Irks it, each day of many days we plod,
Tongue-tied and deaf, along life's common road.
But suddenly, we know not how, a sound
Of living streams, an odour, a flower crowned
With dew, a lark upspringing from the sod,
And we awake. O joy and deep amaze!
Beneath the everlasting hills we stand,
We hear the voices of the morning seas,
And earnest prophesyings in the land,
While from the open heaven leans forth at gaze
The encompassing great cloud of witnesses.[2]

The Preaching of Repentance.

Luke iii. 3.—'Preaching the baptism of repentance.'

CICERO tells us that it is the first office of the orator to win his listeners; and if to do this be the measure of success, then John the Baptist was a failure. He was not an 'encouraging preacher,' if an encouraging preacher is one who makes people contented with themselves. The first impulse of languid curiosity deepened often into something more eager, but that in turn gave way to indignant resentment and sometimes to downright hatred. No 'gentleman' likes to be called a viper, still less to hear his class described as a 'viper's brood.' Yet this was John's way, which was, in fact, as many people thought, a much too plain-spoken way.

But there were others with whom this was not the case. They were not of any one class alone, but of many classes. Now it was a soldier and now a man of business, and still oftener the 'common people' who came to him. They asked him questions, and he helped them; but the thing to be noted is that he began by preaching to these people precisely the same unpleasant truths that he preached to the classes above them. 'He came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.' There was such a thing as sin. There was a way of having one's sins remitted or forgiven; and that was something about which, first of all, men needed to be concerned. This was the message; and while to a great many it was an extremely distasteful message, there were others who welcomed it with equal eagerness and thanksgiving.

So it was then, and so it is largely now. We change the surroundings, but in substance the audience is for ever the same. If John the Baptist should come to London or New York, and should find his way into the pulpit of a modern church, it is not likely that we should all listen to him with equal or unmixed delight. It may be that neither the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the taxgatherers, nor the soldiers are here. It may be that nothing could be more unlike the conditions of Jewish life, eighteen or nineteen hundred years ago, than our own. It may even be that it is unreasonable to expect anybody here to listen with the same emotions to that which was so fresh and strange then, but which is neither fresh nor strange now. But the one factor which has not essentially altered in all these long years of progress and enlightenment is human nature. When we come to look a little closer at that, it is surprising to see how like is its attitude, now and then, to the truth of God.

1. For what was the attitude of Pharisaism? It had exchanged, we say, a reverence for the spirit of religion for a mechanical devotion to its form. It had lost the sense of sin, and the nobleness of goodness, in a stiff and dry devotion to mere details of ceremony. These it not merely exaggerated, but fiercely and angrily contended for. No page in Jewish history is scarred more deeply with the traces of embittered controversy than those which tell us of the dissensions of the rival Pharisaic schools of Shammai and Hillel. To these the fringes of a garment, the breadth of a frontlet, the colour of a vestment, became the

[1] P. Sabatier, *Life of St. Francis of Assisi*, 72.
[2] E. Dowden.

synonyms for sin and righteousness. How they could magnify their consequence, and despise the people who neglected them! Is all this without its parallel to-day, and among us? The transition from such a view of the outward offices of religion to that other which makes them the one thing supremely worth attending to, or contending about, is a short and easy one. This is modern Pharisaism, or modern ceremonialism, contemptuous of those who are ignorant or indifferent as to its rites and usages; priding itself upon its superiority; fond of calling itself the Church, and prompt to dismiss all Christians of other names to that uncovenanted mercy which very easily comes to be understood to be no mercy at all.

¶ By the side of the moral law grows up a law of ceremonial observance, to which is attached a notion of superior sanctity and especial obligation. Morality, though not at first disowned, is slighted as comparatively trivial. Duty in the high sense comes to mean religious duty, that is to say, the attentive observance of certain forms and ceremonies, and these forms and ceremonies come into collision little or not at all with ordinary life, and ultimately have a tendency to resolve themselves into payments of money.

Thus rises what is called idolatry. I do not mean by idolatry the mere worship of manufactured images. I mean the separation between practical obligation, and new moons and sabbaths, outward acts of devotion, or formulas of particular opinions. It is a state of things perpetually recurring; for there is nothing, if it would only act, more agreeable to all parties concerned. Priests find their office magnified and their consequence increased. Laymen can be in favour with God and man, so priests tell them, while their enjoyments or occupations are in no way interfered with. The mischief is that the laws of nature remain meanwhile unsuspended; and all the functions of society become poisoned through neglect of them. Religion, which ought to have been a restraint, becomes a fresh instrument of evil—to the imaginative and the weak a contemptible superstition, to the educated a mockery, to knaves and hypocrites a cloak of iniquity, to all alike—to those who suffer and those who seem to profit by it—a lie so palpable as to be worse than atheism itself.[1]

[1] J. A. Froude.

2. Over against this stands, now as formerly, the spirit of the Sadducee. Sometimes he stands outside of church boundaries, but, in these days, quite as often within them. In this, as before, he resembles his predecessor. It is a mistake to suppose that the Sadducees of John the Baptist's day were what we call infidels. This, briefly, was their creed: They denied the authority of tradition, but accepted the authority of the written law. They denied the existence of angels or spirits, and also the resurrection of the dead. They affirmed the freedom of the will, the existence of God, and the insignificance of ceremonies. And thus they resembled those to-day who, rejecting the traditions of their fathers, have drifted away into a remoteness greater or less from the faith of the past.

It cannot but be obvious that a great many religious teachers—and they are those whose words are most eagerly caught up, and passed on from lip to lip—devote no small share of their time to denunciation and ridicule of the doctrinal teaching of the men who went before them. If you took from them the privilege of thundering against the harsh dogmas of Calvinism, it is difficult to see with what they would employ themselves. The past is ransacked for monsters whom they may disinter and denounce, and then anew destroy; and, coupled with these denunciations, there is a freedom and boldness in declaring what are the character and purposes of God towards men, which implies an intimacy with the Divine mind that is simply amazing. If we are to believe these preachers, God cannot be seriously angry any more with anybody, or under any circumstances. When we sin, we are not wronging Him half so much as we are wronging ourselves, and we may be tolerably sure that He will forgive us our sins, whether we greatly care to have Him do so, or no. He is our Father we are reminded; and He loves us so tenderly that, no matter what we do or what we become, it will all turn out for the best; and we shall find that our sins (about which we have needlessly tormented ourselves) were only so many steps in the process of that education which will somehow make of the vilest sinner the loftiest saint. We must learn to be very forgiving, and then we must remember that God's forgiveness is greater than our utmost reach of imagination can conceive.

In all this there is just that element of truth in which lie always the strength and the danger of error. God is our Father; and there are moments in which we may too easily forget that truth, and turn away from Him when we ought to turn towards Him.

But God is supremely a moral Governor; and the world has no meaning, and life no adequate explanation, save as both exist to teach men the difference between good and evil—the august sanctions and bright rewards of the one, the deadly harm and the inevitable retributions of the other. It is this, and this only, that explains the cross of Christ, and the sufferings and anguish of its Divine victim. If we are to reduce these to a merely pictorial representation of the compassion of God for His children, then it is impossible to understand how God could inflict torture so terrible for an end so unnecessary. Men are not so unwilling to believe in the Fatherhood and tenderness of God that it needed such an exhibition as that visibly to proclaim it to them. But what they are unwilling to believe in is the deadly and destroying power of sin, and the need of forsaking it and of having it remitted and forgiven. To make them understand this, to make them understand how brutal and devilish the spirit of sin is, to show them how it wounds and defaces and kills the nature that it enslaves, One is suffered to endure in His own person its utmost penalty, and thus to win men to repent of their own sins, and to seek through Him their forgiveness.

3. This, then, is both John's message and Christ's message to you and to me: 'Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' There is a wrath to come. Make haste and flee from it while you may! There is such a thing as sin. Its trail is over your past and mine; and we need, before God, to be sorry for it, and to forsake it. There is a Being whose loving office is the forgiveness of our sins; but unless we care enough for His forgiveness to seek it, and are sufficiently conscious of our sins to be willing both to mourn them and to renounce them, no Fatherhood of God or tenderness of His Son will shield us from their consequences both of penalty and of remorse. We are fond, some of us, of saying that now at last we are emancipated from the fear of hell. Some teachers tell us that there is no hell at all, and others that its punishments are of no great consequence, if there be. Oftener than anything else, nowadays, do we hear from certain quarters that strain of preaching which reminds us how poor a coward he is, how mean a slave, who has to be frightened into heaven by means of his fears of hell. But if he is a poor and pitiful coward who is driven to heaven only by fears of the torments of hell, what shall we say of that vaunting liberalism which declares that it has abolished hell, and thenceforward holds itself free, because it has escaped penalty, to do precisely as it pleases? If love is a mightier spell than fear, then let the disciples of love take care that that love is seen to be in their lives a more potent and constraining motive to daily duty, to Godward reverence, to a blameless and unselfish life. 'A liberal theology!'—this is the cry of the hour, and over against it there rings the clear voice of the Apostle: 'As free,' yes; but 'not using your liberty as the cloak of license, but as the servants of God.' No emancipation, whether from Jewish law, or Roman superstition, or Calvinistic dogma, can take you outside the limits of that eternal jurisdiction. God has made you. He will judge you; and, whatever any lax and lawless voice may try to persuade you to believe, wrong-doing needs to be repented of, and sin to be forgiven.

¶ During a mission conducted in Halifax by Mr. Kennedy, General Secretary of the Y.M.C.A., he was given a good definition of repentance. A man said it was 'a heart broken because of sin.' 'No,' said another, 'it is a heart broken from sin.'

Magdalene at Michael's gate
  Tirled at the pin;
On Joseph's thorn sang the blackbird,
  'Let her in! Let her in!'

'Hast thou seen the wounds?' said Michael,
  'Knowest thou thy sin?'
'It is evening, evening,' sang the blackbird,
  'Let her in! Let her in!'

'Yes, I have seen the wounds,
  And I know my sin.'
'She knows it well, well, well,' sang the blackbird,
  'Let her in! Let her in!'

'Thou bringest no offering,' said Michael,
'Nought save sin.'
And the blackbird sang, 'She is sorry, sorry, sorry,
'Let her in! Let her in!'

When he had sung himself to sleep,
And night did begin,
One came and opened Michael's gate
And Magdalene went in.[1]

Enthusiasm.

Luke iii. 16.—'John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.'

1. Among the persons who group themselves about Jesus, the most dramatic and picturesque figure is certainly John the Baptist. There is in him a most extraordinary combination of audacity and humility. He is bold, denunciatory, confident; but at the same time he is self-effacing and preparatory in his work. He never thinks of his service as final; after him is to come a Man who is to be preferred before him. There is always the work larger than his to follow. There are in him the most beautiful humility and the most absolute bravery, and this makes perhaps the rarest combination of traits which a character can show. It is all summed up in his doctrine of the two baptisms: the baptism by water, which John is to bring, and the baptism by the Holy Ghost and by fire, which is to be brought by Jesus.

Water is, of course, the symbol of cleansing, the washing away of one's old sins, an expulsive, negative work. Fire is the symbol of passion, enthusiasm, flame. It is illuminating, kindling, the work of the Holy Ghost. One of these baptisms prepares for the other. First, a man must be clean and then he may be passionate. First, the fire of his base affections must be washed away and then the fire of a new enthusiasm may be lighted. And only that second step makes one a Christian. It is a great thing to have life cleansed, and its conceits and follies washed away. But that is not safety. The cleansing is for the moment only. It is like that house which was swept and garnished, but, because it was left empty, was invaded by tenants worse than the first. The only salvation of the soul lies in the kindling of a new passion, the lighting of the fire of a new intention, the expulsive power, as it has been called, of a new affection.

Thus the transition from John the Baptist to Christ was, in part at least (though, of course, it was much more than this), the transition from the quiescence of a negative and prudential morality to the living and throbbing energy of a moral and spiritual enthusiasm.

Enthusiasm! The very word brings us to a pause. How often have we heard enthusiasm spoken of as a thing to be feared, or ashamed of, or amused at! How often does the cynic or the man of the world (singularly so called, when you consider the kind of 'world' that he inhabits) fling his airy epithets at the enthusiast, warn him of the sobering influence of a little practical experience, and pass on as though he had said the last word on the subject! Well, let the cynic go his way: he talks of that which he does not understand. Tell him that there is no real strength, no power, no virtue in the world without enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is not a dream or an excitement—'the flash and outbreak of a fiery mind'—but the most intensely practical of all things. By enthusiasm all the great achievements of the race have been conceived and brought to the birth; to enthusiasm no path is barred, no height inaccessible; by enthusiasm you may remove mountains. Cherish it, therefore, if you have it, as a gift of God, precious beyond words; cherish it, and let it give warmth and light in some of the cold, dim places of the earth; and do not suffer yourself to be robbed of it by the wise maxims, the prudent timidity, or the jaded scorn of those who, at heart, would often gladly share it with you if they could. In your life it is the mainspring without which the wheels of your world will never move to any purpose: it is 'the very pulse of the machine.'

2. It was with this kind of fire, then, that Christ baptized His followers. It was to this supreme virtue of Christian enthusiasm that He entrusted the great and apparently hopeless task of uplifting and regenerating a corrupt society. How did He succeed in so stupendous a work?

[1] H. Kingsley, *Blessed are the Dead*, 153.

By what means did He create a virtue which was then practically unknown? The creation of this force is one of the most wonderful facts in the history of the Christian religion; and so far as we are able to understand the mystery of its genesis, it seems to have been inspired in a two-fold way.

(1) In the first place, it was Christ who revealed to mankind the real character of sin and of suffering, and who held up in its true light before the eyes of men the human soul as darkened by the one or as depressed by the other. And it was especially on the strange enigma of sin that He revolutionized men's thoughts. There is a famous passage in the *Republic* of Plato in which the human soul in its present state is compared to the sea-god Glaucus, whose body was so worn and wasted by the sea, and so covered with sea-weed and shells, that its original beauty could be distinguished no longer. 'If only,' says Plato, 'the soul would follow after that which is divine, and lift itself out of these fretting and turbid waves, and disentangle itself from the clustering stones and sea-weed, we should become aware how beautiful, how glorious it is!'

This passage, however, remarkable though it is, is but the utterance of one great mind far in advance of his age. The sense of sin was the creation of Jesus Christ. Before Christ, as a rule, men had no idea of sin as we now understand it. If they were Greeks, they regarded wrong-doing as a failure in the art and symmetry of life; if they were Romans, they counted it a mistaken policy or an error of judgment; if they were Jews, they spoke of it (except in some isolated voice of prophet or psalmist) as a breach of the Mosaic Law. None of them saw sin, as vividly as Christ saw it, to be an offence against a Person—a Person all-pure, all-holy, and One bound to the sinner by the intimate relationship of Father to son. It was this that constituted, and it is this that still constitutes, the real misery and guilt of sin—that he who commits it is a son; one whose every wrong act is an act of disobedience to a Father's love, whose every wrong act is a violation and a defilement of a character fashioned after the Divine likeness. Therefore it was that Christ was filled with a compassion so infinite, yet so personal for the sinner; therefore, also, it was that He was able to inspire in His disciples a feeling, mounting into enthusiasm, for the souls whom they might yet rescue from the haunting terror of this plague.

Such a sentiment, extended to every being who wore the garb of humanity, became, in the early Christians, a feeling not dissimilar to that which good and great men have sometimes experienced in the fall of one near and dear to themselves. It was the feeling of King Arthur at the sight of his guilty and unfaithful Queen:

> I did not come to curse thee, Guinevere;
> I whose vast pity almost makes me die
> To see thee laying there thy golden head,
> My pride in happier summers, at my feet.

Or it was the passion of Othello when the wife whom he had held above suspicion, and whom he had so treasured that he would not have sold her for a whole world made

> Of one entire and perfect chrysolite,

fell, as he believed, into the lowest depths of ignominy and shame.

> The pity of it, Iago! O Iago, the pity of it!—

Four little words, yet surely in all literature the saddest!

(2) But there was much more in the impulse of Christian enthusiasm than the sense, however keen and pure, of the infinite value of every human soul, and of the terrible strain and unnaturalness of sin. In its origin Christianity was nothing else than a personal devotion to Jesus Christ; and it was this personal devotion that went far towards making men enthusiasts. 'He that is near Me,' was one of His unwritten sayings, 'is near the fire.' Christ baptized men with fire by attaching them to Himself.

What did this come to mean for them in practical life? It came to mean that in helping or serving his brother man the early Christian felt that he was helping and serving Christ. It was Christ, actually Christ Himself, who stood there before him in the guise of the poor, the naked, the hungry, or the miserable. Had not Christ told him so? Had He not warned him that in serving or in neglecting the humblest member of the community he would be serving or neglecting no less a one than Christ? 'Ye have done it unto me.' Christ had lived and

died for the race; He had been the representative of the race; He had identified Himself with the race and with each one of its members; and, therefore, in binding every disciple so closely to Himself, He was binding him with equal closeness to all the human creatures for whom He suffered. Every little act of the Christian born out of love and pity thus became an offering to the Crucified: every little act done in sympathy for a human brother or sister was consecrated by the thought that here, in these sad or needy or sinful or repellent shapes, were the true objects of Christ's own love in life and in death, and that they must of necessity be dear to all to whom He and His Cross were dear. The personal qualities of men sank into insignificance beside the overshadowing fact of their common humanity; Christ had believed in them all, had hoped for them all with a quenchless hope, however low they might have fallen; and thus the worst and most degraded specimens of humanity appealed to a Peter or a Paul, and aroused their pity to enthusiasm, because they felt, in spite of the pessimist, that an undying love of beauty and of goodness still lingers in the depths of every human heart.

¶ Hear what Napoleon says in conversation with General Bertrand in his exile on St. Helena: 'Christ speaks, and at once generations become his by stricter, closer ties than those of blood—by the most sacred, the most indissoluble of all ties. He lights up the flame of love which consumes self-love, which prevails over every other love. The founders of other religions never conceived of this mystical love, which is the essence of Christianity, and is beautifully called charity. In every attempt to effect this thing, namely, *to make himself beloved,* man deeply feels his own impotence. So that Christ's greatest miracle undoubtedly is the reign of charity.

I have so inspired multitudes that they would die for me. God forbid that I should form any comparison between the enthusiasm of the soldier and Christian charity, which are as unlike as their cause. But after all, my presence was necessary; the lightning of my eye, my voice, a word from me, then the sacred fire was kindled in their hearts. I do, indeed, possess the secret of this magical power which lifts the soul; but I could never impart it to any one. None of my generals ever learned it from me; nor have I the means of perpetuating my name, and love for me, in the hearts of men, and to effect these things without physical means.'[1]

The Baptism of Jesus.

Luke iii. 21.—'Jesus also being baptized.'

THE meeting of Jesus and John, and the recognition of the Messiah by His forerunner, is one of the picturesque situations in the gospel history, and it is perfect in its spontaneity. As the Baptist brooded in the wilderness over the prophecies of the ancient time, and as he declared unto the multitude with strong conviction that the 'kingdom of God' was at hand, the one passion of his life rose to white heat, and his eager heart was eaten up with expectation. The atmosphere of the age was charged with the sense of the Messiah, and the lonely prophet strained his ears to catch the first sound of His feet. Any day, and, for that matter, any hour, the romance of faith might culminate, and the Hope of Israel appear. Every morning the hermit would rise and leave the home hewn out of the rock, which tradition gives him for a dwelling-place, to wait for the breaking of the day, since the rising of the sun might be the shining of His face; and he would lie down with sad reluctance, hardly daring to sleep lest the darkness should be the shadow of his Lord. Was the Christ already in the land, hidden and unknown, or would He come from afar with sudden glory? Would He show Himself by infallible signs, so that all men should be compelled to own Him, or would He appear secretly putting all men to the test by His presence, and already, before He was recognized, separating with His fan the wheat from the chaff? It is certain that the Baptist had been saved from one vain delusion by his study of Isaiah: he did not expect the imperial Messiah of the gross Jewish imagination; but as little was he prepared to recognize his Lord, whose forerunner he had been, among the crowd who heard his message of repentance and submitted to the sacrament of penitence. Yet it was in these circumstances that the Baptist one day identified Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, and knew that his work had not been in vain.

[1] *The Table Talk and Opinions of Napoleon Buonaparte*, 120.

The scene of the Baptism was probably the lower course of the Jordan, some miles from its entrance into the Dead Sea. Here the plain is desolate and sterile, and covered with grass during three months of the year only, though the aqueducts in the malarious marshes of the river near Jericho show it to have been once highly cultivated. At present the only vegetation that arrests the eye is the line of oleander and tamarisk that marks the course of the little river. The latter varies from thirty to seventy yards in width, except in time of flood.

Forbidding as the scene is now, and unromantic as it must ever have been, it is rich in hallowed associations. Near this spot the priests' feet rested with the ark of God, while Jordan shrank back at His word, and His people passed from the wilderness into the Land of Promise to fight for the covenanted rest. So stood the Son of Man on the borders of His inheritance, awaiting the sign of His Father's commission to go up and possess it. Like that of Israel it was an inheritance not to be lightly won, but to be attained only through distress and blood, and He must labour to enter into His rest. It was to this spot that Elijah and Elisha had come after the Spirit had led them from Gilgal to Bethel, from Bethel to Jericho, and from Jericho to Jordan. Here Elijah smote the waters and they passed over, and the double portion of his spirit descended upon Elisha, who with eyes strengthened for the heavenly vision received the mantle of the ascending prophet. So had the same Spirit led the Son of Man to the Second Elijah, who must decrease while He increased; so was He to behold the heavens rent asunder, and to receive not a 'double portion,' but the fullness of the Spirit which rested 'by measure' upon John.

1. St. Luke tells us that Jesus was baptized alone, after 'all the people were baptized.' While His reception of the rite at all showed His oneness with His race, His reception of it alone showed the uniqueness of His Person and mission. He was 'separate from sinners' even while He was made 'like unto his brethren' in all things but their sin. The fitness of such isolation was recognized in after days by those who brought for His triumphal entry into Jerusalem a colt 'whereon no man ever yet sat,' and by him who 'laid him in a tomb that was hewn in stone, where never man had yet lain.'

2. Jesus descends into the waters of baptism and leaves there in the hurrying, restless, resistless stream the happy, obscure past. Now must He be manifested to Israel and through Israel to the world. The old family relationships and personal ties are expanded into an infinite significance. Henceforth he that does the will of His father shall be His 'brother and sister and mother.' In those waters the family is merged in the race, the local in the universal, the temporal in the eternal. He emerges with a heavier load than He took in. He has declared Himself one with sinful men, bone of their bone, flesh of their flesh, the bearer of their sorrows, sicknesses, and sins. Now He must go all lengths with His brethren till their curse is lifted, till the seed of the woman bruises the serpent's head, till the Kingdom of God comes by way of the Cross. There is no looking back now that the hand is on the plough. The Jordan is His Rubicon.

3. It is Luke, again, who tells us that Jesus prayed after His baptism. Like the Baptism and the Temptation and all His other experiences, His prayers were eminently real. He prayed because He needed to pray, because His spirit demanded intercourse with His Father either for its own needs or for the Kingdom He came to establish. He did not pray officially, as our example, and for that very reason His example is the more persuasive. For what did He pray? We are permitted to answer this question only so far as light is thrown upon it by the recorded answer to His prayer. From this we gather that the prayer was mainly for Himself, for revelation on His mission and for equipment for it. If in after days we hear Him telling us, 'Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you,' we shall remember that He has asked and sought and knocked with prevailing prayer. If He says, 'If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?' we shall remember that He asked and received the Holy Spirit as He prayed by the banks of the Jordan.

What hopeless depravity must there be in your

heart when, with all He can do, God simply cannot get you to come to Him in prayer. 'It came to pass that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, Lord, teach us to pray.' Will you not be like that disciple? Will you not tell your Saviour what a dislike, even to down-right antipathy, you have for secret prayer; how little you attempt it, and how soon you are weary of it? Only pray, O you prayerless people of His, and the heaven will soon open to you also, and you will hear your Father's voice, and the Holy Ghost will descend like a dove upon you. Only pray, and your joy will soon be full.

¶ Put 'labouring' into the place of such 'praying,' and you will surely find, if you will look, a degeneracy in the spiritual quality of your labouring. Put public or social worship in the place of Secret Prayer, and you will find, I venture to say, that your individual insight into sin, and righteousness, and judgment, on the one hand, and into Christ your righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, on the other, is waning, and growing dim, and as it were generalizing itself away into mist and cold. You will find in short that you as an individual sinner, an individual believer, cannot minimize your solitary, secret, individual seasons of confession, petition, and praise, without the results that are to be expected. Your spiritual life-pulse will be feebler. Your whole renewed nature and its work will suffer from the centre.[1]

The Signs at Jesus' Baptism.

Luke iii. 21. 22.—'Now it came to pass, when all the people were baptized, that, Jesus also having been baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily form, as a dove, upon him.'

THE threefold answer given in the rending heavens, the Divine Voice, and the descent of the Holy Spirit as a dove, seems to have been visible and audible only to Jesus and John. Matthew tells us that 'the heavens were opened *unto him,*' and the Baptist testifies, in John i. 32-34, to having seen and received the sign. The multitude seem to have heard and seen little or nothing. These things are spiritually discerned. To the unprepared the spiritual world may be convulsed, the heavens may rend, the Divine Voice utter its message, yet their soul is unruffled by any sympathetic tremor, their eyes and ears are sealed, they will but say, 'It thundered.'

1. The first of the signs of the Baptism was that 'the heavens were opened,' or, as Mark says, 'rent asunder.' This phrase implies the opening of the spiritual world to him who sees the sign, a revelation of spiritual realities which have hitherto been sealed to him. This is what it meant to Ezekiel when he wrote, 'I was among the captives by the river Chebar,' and 'the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.' And this is what it meant to Jesus, though but a corner of the veil is lifted for us to gather a hint of the contents of the revelation. When that vivid blue veil was rent asunder, did He see in the light that streamed from the throne of God the eternal redemptive purpose laid bare, the necessity and place of the Cross and Resurrection in that purpose, the triumph and glory of His Church? Whatever may be our answers to these questions they must needs be conjectural. We are on safer expository ground when we search in the words of the Divine Voice for an explanation of what Jesus saw in the rending heavens.

2. This voice is the second of the signs of the Baptism. Its message was given in the words, 'Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.' Two of the three Evangelists give this form of the utterance, making it a communication to Jesus Himself. The other (Matthew) gives it as a message to John, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' We take it as including both a witness to John and a revelation to Jesus. As the latter it implies the unveiling of the full significance of His unique relation to the Father, the final stage in the progress of His self-consciousness of Divinity, the explanation of the mystery of the Virgin Birth, of the unshadowed communion with God through the years of childhood and adolescence, and of the sense of representative manhood which had brought Him to the waters of baptism.

If the words of the Voice are to be regarded thus as a revelation to Jesus (and the direct form

[1] H. C. G. Moule, *All in Christ*, 80.

of address is hard to understand otherwise) their natural explanation is that they are a testimony of His unique Sonship, and include a revelation of all that that Sonship involves. This is not only supported by the fact that 'the heavens were rent asunder,' implying, as we have seen, direct revelation of hitherto hidden spiritual truths, but by the twice repeated doubt suggested by the Tempter soon afterwards, 'If thou art the Son of God.' If this relation was newly revealed in its fullest meaning and consequences the attempt to cast doubt upon it and to involve the signs of the Baptism in obscurity acquires an added subtlety and strength. That this revelation must have come at some point during His progress in wisdom is obvious. What fitter time than at the Baptism? What more natural explanation of the accompanying signs? At the same time we must hold such an interpretation tentatively because of our lack of both external evidence and internal experience, disabilities which must always make it difficult for us to penetrate our Lord's self-consciousness.

If this was the meaning of the rent heavens and the Divine voice—the double revelation of the redemptive mission and the unique Sonship—what wonder that the human nature should sink under the double weight of the awful responsibility of the mission and of the still more awful dignity and rapture of the Divine relation. No manhood, however perfect, could support that weight of glory unless strengthened by Divine grace, or could fulfil this high mission unless equipped with Divine gifts. So there comes to Him to strengthen and equip His manhood from the opened heavens, 'the Spirit of God descending as a dove.'

3. The dove is the third of the signs of the Baptism. She is the eloquent symbol of the Holy Spirit's operations and characteristics, of purity and modesty, of peace (as she returns from the troubled waters with the olive leaf fresh plucked), of beauty ('her wings covered with silver and her pinions with yellow gold'), of tenderness and fertility, nurturing her young with anxious care. So the Spirit of God is represented by Milton, following the suggestion of Genesis, in the picture of primeval chaos—

'Dove-like sat brooding on the vast abyss.'

The symbol of the Holy Spirit came in an organic form and 'abode upon him' (John i. 32), to indicate that the *fullness* of the Spirit was His, not as He came at Pentecost to His infant Church under the symbol of 'cloven tongues parting asunder.' Jesus received the Spirit not as the afflatus of the prophets, which filled or left them at the instance of the Divine will, not as the ecstasies of strength which came to Samson when 'the Spirit of the Lord began to move in the camp of Dan,' but as a serene fullness of power and light, upholding and equipping the human body and mind under all the demands of His redemptive ministry. Henceforth, to men who have eyes to see, He is the full revelation, in the form of man, of God's light and glory.

But why was it a dove? Why was it in bodily shape like that winged creature which we call a dove? 'All apparitions,' says Thomas Goodwin, 'that God at any time made of Himself were not so much made to show to men what God is in Himself, as to show us how He is affected towards us, and to declare what effects He will work in us.' Excellently and enlighteningly said. For if there is one winged creature better fitted than another to symbolize how God is affected toward us, and what effects God would fain work in us, it is surely just a dove. 'For a dove, you know,' says the sometime President of Magdalen College, Oxford, 'is the most meek and the most innocent of all birds; without gall, without talons, having no fierceness in it, expressing nothing but love and friendship to its mate in all its carriages, and mourning over its mate in all its distresses. And, accordingly, a dove was a most fit emblem of the Spirit that was poured out upon our Saviour when He was just about to enter on the work of our Salvation. For as sweetly as doves do converse with doves, so may every sinner and Christ converse together.' Quite so. And to go no further than Christ's very first sermon, what could be more dove-like than the text He took out of the evangelical prophet?—'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.' Beautiful, is it not? Blessed to hear for the thousandth time, is it not? Remem-

ber the Jordan, then. Go often back to the Jordan. Look up at the opening heaven and think you see the descending dove. And at any time when you have to go to Christ again as a broken-hearted sinner, bruised and blinded with your sin, go back to Him thinking of the Jordan, and of the dove, and pleading to yourself and to Him the argument of His favourite text. And then in return to Him for all that, be a very dove yourself. Be gentle, be kind, be helpful, be to all men a man of an approachable, affable, inviting, dove-like disposition. Be to all men a man after the manner of Christ to you, and after the manner of the dove among all the birds of the air. It is His own word to all His disciples: Be ye harmless as doves.

The generous Christian must as well improve
In the quality of the serpent, as the dove;
He must be innocent; afraid to do
A wrong; and crafty to prevent it too.
They must be mixed, and tempered with true love:
An ounce of serpent serves a pound of dove.[1]

Fellowship with Jesus.

Luke iii. 21.—'Now it came to pass, when all the people were baptized, that, Jesus also having been baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened.'

ALONE as our Lord stands in the majesty of His mission, and in the fullness of His equipment for it, we, in our measure, may have fellowship with Him in these.

1. This fellowship is possible, in the first place, in the possession of the spirit of prayer as the guide of life. Spirit-guided as the Master always is, He seeks special help and guidance in prayer when He reaches a time of crisis. 'Jesus, having been baptized, and praying.' How many bruised reeds do we trust to at such times—human calculations, friendly advice, forecast of material probabilities, use of material influences—rather than the direct light and strength which come to the understanding and heart straight from the throne of God. We act as if the world were governed by carnal instead of spiritual powers, and only when these fail us do we seek God as a last resource. Were He not 'the same God whose property is always to have mercy,' He would spurn such languid and belated prayers, and would not deign to be regarded as one of the least among the forces which rule the world. The prayer of the Christian who believes in God and uses Him is no superstitious reliance upon Him to the disregard of material and secondary causes, nor is it a lazy expedient for cutting the Gordian knot of life, for saving trouble and shifting responsibility; it is a recognition of the supremacy of God's will and of the dependence of its operation in human affairs upon our asking for it. He in whom dwells the Master's spirit of prayer sees in all the laws and forces of the world a means of the expression of the will of God, and in prayer he touches the nerve centre whence radiate these labyrinthine lines of law, each of which is a sensitive conductor which thrills to the impulse of that Sovereign will. His life is permeated from the centre outwards by this spirit of prayer, this paramount sense of the Divine purpose working in him, while others, in practice if not in theory, acknowledge the use of prayer only as a final despairing experiment.

The old story of the man in the sinking ship—who was told by the captain that their only hope was in Providence, and who exclaimed, 'Has it come to that!'—is re-acted every day under varying circumstances of tragi-comedy which must move the angels to laughter or tears.

2. In answer to His prayer Jesus found light upon His great mission from the opened heavens. We may have a partial fellowship with Him in this also. We too have a share in the purpose of God, a mission to fulfil which He reveals to the purged heart and prayerful spirit. This mission may have in it nothing of that heroic and romantic self-abnegation, the craving for which is sometimes but a subtle form of egotism; but none the less it is God's revealed will for us, and as such it must be fulfilled as Christ fulfilled His. The appointed work may not strike the imagination, but it will nourish the spirit. The conviction that it is in God's plan will lift it above the commonplace, and will inspire our work with efficiency and our spirits with content.

While we would avoid encouraging that egotism which is ever

Seeking for some great thing to do
Or secret thing to know,

[1] Francis Quarles.

we cannot but be haunted by a suspicion that many a man misses the distinction and blessedness of doing a great work for God by neglecting to tarry in His presence until the heavens open upon it, and so goes through life, however outwardly successful, with a dim consciousness of having missed his way. How many a grand minister and missionary, educationist and social philanthropist has the world lost by the disregard of the inward prompting of the Spirit which might have ripened into revelation under the fostering influence of urgent prayer and willing obedience! The sneers of superior persons, in literature and out of it, have been levelled at people with a Mission (spelt with a capital M). If these sneers have sometimes stripped the cloak of religion from ostentatious self-advertisement they have done a measure of good, but in general they are an expression of that prevalent frivolity of spirit which refuses to believe in the sincerity of any form of earnestness, and which cackles down with the laughter of fools every honest effort to purge the world of its evils. If all men had fellowship with Christ in His baptismal vision, the world would be full of people with a Mission, and they would spell the word with the largest capital at their command, to show their reverence for the Revealer.

¶ When once thou hast conceived and determined thy mission within thy soul, let naught arrest thy steps. Fulfil it with all thy strength; fulfil it, whether blessed by love, or visited by hate; whether strengthened by others, or in the sad solitude that almost always surrounds the masters of thought. The path is clear before us; we are cowards, unfaithful to our own future, if, in spite of sorrows and delusions, we do not pursue it to the end.[1]

3. As to Jesus, so to us—with the revelation of the mission comes swiftly and surely the equipment for its fulfilment. God never reveals a task which He leaves us without power to complete. All His commands are implicit promises. The heaven is rent, the work revealed, the Spirit given. The duty that seemed too hard, the work that seemed too lofty, have now become possible, if not easy, with the influx of the Divine power. How many of God's chosen servants, from the Apostles downward, have been lifted from doubt, hesitation, weakness, ineffectiveness, to faith, purpose and power by this same gift of the Holy Spirit! How many, too, have struggled with their task in a spirit of grievous bondage, and at the end of the day have, in bitterness of soul, laid it down unfulfilled, because they never sought or received this equipment in its fullness! For, like all God's spiritual gifts, the Holy Spirit is given to those who ask Him, it is conditioned by our receptiveness. While it is true that His commands are implicit promises, the promises must be claimed and appropriated, above all this 'Promise of the Father.'

We see in this Divine anointing of Jesus a part of that condescension by which from first to last in His state of humiliation He submitted His manhood to the guidance and inspiration of the Spirit. The Spirit presides over the mystery of His birth; 'driveth him into the wilderness' at the Temptation; endows Him with miraculous powers ('I by the Spirit of God cast out devils'); strengthens Him for the final sacrifice when 'through the eternal Spirit' Jesus offers Himself to God; and here at His Baptism He seeks and gains the fullness of that Divine power by which His perfect manhood was nourished. If even Jesus was dependent on the Holy Spirit during His earthly course, can we presume to neglect or despise the Spirit's light and strength, we who are compassed about with weakness, whose evil passions need no such withdrawal of the Divine power to rise insurgent against the Divine law?

There is nothing arbitrary in the sacred narrative in the linking of the descent of the Holy Ghost with the testimony of the voice to the Divine Sonship. The connection is necessary, and has its counterpart in all who follow Christ and drink of His Spirit. His Sonship of God, solitary as it is, is the basis of ours. His relationship with the Father is the pattern filial relationship, and from that Father 'every fatherhood in heaven and upon earth is named.' So we find that the Holy Spirit testifies to us as to Jesus, 'Thou art my beloved son,' for He 'beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.' When both the mission and the equipment have been given, the 'spirit of bondage' is supplanted by the 'spirit

[1] Mazzini.

of adoption'; we work no longer as bond-servants but as sons, no longer chafing against harsh and uncongenial restrictions, but exulting in a service which is perfect freedom. Then God's peace fills our hearts, a peace for which so many strive in ignorance of the conditions on which it is granted; for 'peace, like pain, is the result of a condition.' We have found our work, we have found our strength, we have found our Father. Now let the wilderness and the temptation come. We are ready.

Jesus came
And laid His own hand on the quivering heart,
And made it very still, that He might write
Invisible words of power—'Free to serve!'
. . . . . .
Let Him write what He will upon our hearts
With His unerring pen. . . . . .
The tearful eye at first may read the line
'Bondage to grief!' but He shall wipe away
The tears, and clear the vision, till it read
In ever-brightening letters, 'Free to serve!'
For whom the Son makes free is free indeed.
. . . . . .
Then let it be
The motto of our lives until we stand
In the great freedom of Eternity,
Where we '*shall* serve Him' while we see His face,
For ever and for ever 'Free to serve.'[1]

Thirty Years of Age.

Luke iii. 23.—'And Jesus himself, when he began to teach, was about thirty years of age.' (RV).

THE Revised Version has corrected what was known to be a mistranslation in this verse. The Evangelist did not say that our Lord 'began to be about thirty years of age' (which is indeed senseless), but that 'when he began,' *i.e.*, when He entered upon the active and public period of His earthly life, He was about thirty years old. When He began *to teach,* the Revised Version has it, and no doubt that is good English and substantially correct; but the original is simply 'when he began,' or, as we might say colloquially, 'when he started.' Everybody knows that the new departure, the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven, is always dated by the sacred writers from our Lord's baptism, not from His birth. It is, of course, quite true, in a most important sense, that salvation came to the world with the Child of Mary. The mere fact of Immanuel being with us, in our very flesh, was the sure pledge of God's redeeming love and grace. It could not be otherwise than well with mankind when the Son of God was born into their midst. So we do quite right to date our years, the years of grace, from His birth: we do quite right to keep Christmas as we do. But it is also true that our Lord's life on earth, up to the age of thirty, was a hidden life; a life, so far as we can tell, absolutely unmarked by any signs or wonders, by any gifts of utterance, by any attempt to teach, by any sort of publicity. The Word of God kept silence for thirty years. It is very wonderful, more wonderful, perhaps, than all the miracles which are recorded afterwards.

1. Some think that it was an old Levitical law that ruled our Lord's long life of seclusion and silence. Some think that it was Moses who fixed for our Lord the exact year of His entrance on His open Messiahship. And for that view of theirs they quote this enactment out of the Books of Moses—'From thirty years old and upward even until fifty years old, all that enter into the host, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation,' and so on. And then there is the fact that Joseph was thirty years old when he first stood before Pharaoh, and David was thirty years old when he began to reign in Hebron. On the other hand, some think that all these cases are but so many Old Testament coincidences, and that they do not throw any real light on the problem of our Lord's thirty years' delay in beginning His openly Messianic life.

2. Should we stumble were we to be told that the very homeliest of all homely duties had not a little to do with Christ's long seclusion in Nazareth? Would it offend our sense of the fitness of things were we to be told that He was not set free from those homely obligations of His till He began to be about thirty years of age? Would it shock our feelings of reverence were we to be told that His weekly wages were all needed at home till the day when His manifestation to

[1] Frances Ridley Havergal.

Israel could no longer be postponed? Read this taunt that His townsmen threw at Him on account of His notorious lack of preparation for His preaching, 'Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James. and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?' And then, as if they were enumerating those of Mary's family who had not as yet found homes of their own, His contemptuous townsmen go on to add—'And his sisters, are they not all with us?' Does it not look as if His four brothers had all gone away to homes of their own, and had left their widowed mother and her unmarried daughters dependent on her eldest Son? Yes. It may well have been for the very humblest and homeliest of reasons that our Lord was still known among His kinsfolk and acquaintances as 'the carpenter's son,' long after He was well into His Messianic ministry.

3. But, humble and homely as our Lord's outward life was for thirty years, all that is perfectly compatible with an inward life that was high and heavenly and far beyond all understanding or imagination of men. Who hath known the mind of our Lord all that time, or who hath been His counsellor during those thirty years of His in Nazareth? Who can tell but that it may have taken Him those thirty years of meditation, and prayer, and communion with His Father, and with the Holy Ghost, and with Himself, to enable Jesus of Nazareth to apprehend that for which He had been apprehended of His Father and of the Holy Ghost? To apprehend, if not to comprehend, what it was for Him, the Son of Mary, to be taken up into the very Godhead of the Son of God, and to be made one with the Son of God for ever. What untold discoveries and experiences and attainments were going forward in those tremendous years, during which a mortal man came at last to feel Himself at home in the bosom of the Father. Just think how long it has taken the Church of Christ, with the Holy Ghost to help her, to enter but a little way into that mystery of Godliness, the Word made flesh. It has taken long centuries for the Holy Ghost to take some of those things of Christ and to show them to Paul, and to John, and to Athanasius, and to Basil, and to Cyril, and to a great apostolic succession of doctors and saints, down to our own day.

4. And then there is this also—during those thirty years He was in all points tempted like as we are. 'And thou shalt remember'—it may be prophetically and mystically read of Him—'all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna . . . that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.' What a spectacle Nazareth must have been, as it was seen from heaven, for those thirty tempted and tried years! No wonder that the angels desired to look into them! And no wonder that at the end of those years the heavens opened, and a voice came down, which said, 'Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'

¶ 'Tempted in all points!' But are there not infinite varieties of trial in which we are placed which have no exact parallel in the life of Christ? Yes; but the soul of man through one experience can transfer itself into many. A great poet, through the humanity that is in him, can realize endless types of humanity.

> Children—I never lost one,
> But my arm's round my own little son;
> And love knows the secret of grief.

Christ, through His human experience, has infinite powers of such realization. In regard to sin, He took upon Him all connected with it, except that which would have unfitted Him for being our Saviour—an actual participation in sin.[1]

The Son of God.

Luke iii. 38.—'The son of Adam, the son of God.'

THIS passage gives the genealogy of Christ; it gives also the genealogy of every man. In St. Matthew's Gospel the genealogy stops at Abraham; it gives the Jewish ancestry of Jesus. St.

[1] J. Ker, *Thoughts for Heart and Life*, 104.

Luke carries us back to the first being who attained to the rank of the human, and then takes the long leap to the Almighty Father—the son of Adam, the son of God. Here then is the genealogy of every man. The intervening links are lost, but the humblest human being reaches back to Adam and up to God. It is a favourite hobby with some men to construct a genealogical tree, and if it shows an unbroken descent through two or three centuries it becomes an object of family pride; but here is a tree which takes us not only to the first parent of the human race but to God in whose likeness we were made. We trace our descent through Adam from God. Now that is a fundamental truth of revelation on which everything else rests. We may turn it round and speak not of the descent but of the ascent of man; it makes no matter; we arrive at the same august truth—that man is kin to God, that he stands so near to God and so intimately shares the Divine nature that he may be called the son of God—Adam, the son of God.

1. We look with science at the slow age-long evolution of life on our planet, the humble forms in which it first began, the growing complexity of organization, the gradual awakening of intelligence, the ability to remember, to treasure and profit by experience, till at last came man, the first being on earth to lift his face to the heavens and respond to God, the first being with mind to understand and heart to love and will to obey God, the first being daring to claim kinship with the Creator of all things—Adam, the son of God. So far from destroying the kinship of man with God, the evolutionary theory makes it more wonderful. We look back upon the unnumbered ages in which earth sent no intelligent response to heaven. The insects flit to and fro in the sunshine, the birds sing in the forest, the beasts roam on the plains, but there is no recognition of the Divine presence, no knowledge of the Divine power, no response to the Divine love. God waits through what seems slowly passing æons, but which to Him are but as a day, and then comes a being who, walking in the forest and on the plain and under the stars, begins to feel the stirrings of reverence and adoration and the desire to worship. He sees a meaning in the natural world which fills him with awe. 'The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork.' And more, he recognizes the presence of God in his own life, and knows that God has to do with his thoughts and desires, his aims and purposes, and that the will of God is his supreme law. He learns that his true life is to be found only in harmony with God. He makes the discovery which Augustine put into the great words, 'O God, thou hast made us for Thyself, and we are restless till we find rest in Thee.'

2. Now to man thus constituted God can speak. The Divine mind can appeal to the human mind, and God did speak—in Nature, in history, in conscience; through patriarch and prophet and psalmist—making known His character and will, until in the fullness of the time God sent forth His Son to be His final and perfect self-revelation to man. It was because man was originally the son of God, made in the Divine likeness, that God could become manifest in the flesh. When God was ready to make the perfect revelation of Himself He did it not by writing His character across the heavens for all men to read, but by appearing in our midst as God incarnate for all men to see. And Jesus, wearing our nature, sharing our lot, standing in our midst, bearing our burdens and carrying our sorrows, could say, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.' It is our kinship with God that makes the Incarnation possible. Adam, the son of God.

Now this view of man, of the infinite value and dignity of every human being, we owe to Christianity. It is this doctrine of the worth of man arising out of his kinship with God that marks the difference between the pre-Christian and the Christian world. We feel, as one has said, 'the breath as of spring in the air, when we pass from Pagan antiquity, with its huge masses of stone, its nameless myriads of slaves, its imperialistic triumphs, into a world where the Christian leaven is working.' In the Pagan world slavery was practically unchallenged, and the owner held the power of life and death in his hands. In the Pagan world infants whom it was not thought worth while to rear were exposed, and the aged and infirm were left to die uncared for. In the Pagan world the State was supreme and men were regarded as means to serve the

purposes of the State. According to the teaching of Christianity, on the other hand, every man, because of his kinship with God, was of infinite worth and every human life was an end in itself. Man was the son of God, and to live as the son of God, to live in fellowship with God, was an end than which nothing more glorious could be imagined. The poorest was worth caring for, the weakest was worth preserving, because he was the son of Adam, the son of God.

Not all at once did this Christian doctrine of personality triumph. Not even now is it accepted in its widest significance. Aristocracies, despotisms, tyrannies are hard to destroy. Slavery lingered for centuries, but it had to face the truth, which finally killed it, that the slave, cut by the lash, was the son of Adam, the son of God. It was on the old Pagan notion of the absolute claim of the State that Prussian imperialism, to which we owe the greatest tragedy of history, was built. For fifty years Germany had been teaching the supremacy of the State. She taught it to the infant on the knee, to the child at school, to the cadet on the training ground. As against the State, represented by the soldier, the common man had no rights. The State was everything; the common man was only cannon fodder. And so the people came to believe that they belonged to the State, body and soul; and with a subservient people behind them the militarist rulers of the State set out to realize their dream of world dominion. But one thing Germany had forgotten to do, ere she set out on her mad campaign of world dominion—she had forgotten to teach the other nations to forgo the rights of man. And so no sooner had she crossed the Belgian border, trampling down law, than she found herself confronted not only with a valiant little nation which she could crush beneath her iron foot, but with an idea which she could never crush, an idea which after four and a quarter years of unspeakable sorrow and suffering at last beat her to the ground. That idea was the idea of liberty, based on the Christian doctrine of the worth of man as the son of Adam, the son of God. And so at last we are standing at the beginning of a new era. In the Biblical sense this is a day of the Lord. Democracy has emerged from thraldom. For good or evil the world's future is in the hands of the people.

The old world breaks
Its mould, and life runs fierce and fluid, a stream
That floods, dissolves, remakes.
Each pregnant movement, charged to its extreme,
Quickens unending future, and all's vain
But the onward mind, that dares the oncoming years
And takes their storm, a Master.
Life shall then
Transfigure Time with yet more marvellous men.

3. Now the only permanent guarantee for the world's future lies in the forces which Christianity has liberated. Get men to accept the Christian teaching of the infinite value and worth of every human being as a son of God, and you have a power that will sweep injustice, oppression, war and vice from the face of the earth. The man who is regarded as a cog in the grinding wheel of industry is the son of Adam, the son of God. The child whose formative years are passed in a reeking slum in an atmosphere that is poisonous to body and soul is the son of Adam, the son of God. The slave of vice who is destroying his better nature, wasting his glorious possibilities and sinking to a lower than animal level, is the son of Adam, the son of God. The man who exploits the weakness of his fellowmen, who grinds the faces of the poor, who builds up a fortune on a foundation of tyranny and injustice —he, too, is the son of Adam, the son of God, and he is effacing the Divine image and ruining his God-given nature. But more than that, democracy needs a leader. Democracy cannot rightly rule itself without submitting to the rule of someone higher than itself. Here is a remarkable picture of what a true democracy ought to be. 'Imagine a people, a hundred million strong, each conscious of his own responsibility, each contributing his genius, self-control and provident pity to the nation as a whole—a hundred million wills all working together to one goal, a hundred million intellects reflecting upon one problem, a hundred million hearts beating with love for the redemption of each through the integrity of the whole!' Now whether it be a hundred millions or fifty or twenty you will not easily match that picture of democracy marching to its sublime goal.

It is hard sometimes to believe in man. When we see men sunk in ignorance, the slaves

of vice, content with the coarsest pleasures, with no outlook, and no spiritual desires and aspirations, it is not easy to believe. But Jesus saw all that and refused to despair even of the worst. He believed that the most degraded men belonged to God, were sons of Adam, the son of God, and were capable of rising into fellowship with Him.

Christ is fit to be the leader of the people, because while He stands in their midst He is yet far above them. We help people, not by being like them, but by being different. The problem is to get near to people with your own richer, stronger, purer, happier life. And Jesus solved it. He was in our midst, one of us, and yet so different—drawing men by His purity, helping them with His strength, communicating to them His own life and peace and joy.

Again, Christ is fitted to be the leader of the people, because there was no limit to His sacrifice on our behalf. For an officer who was prepared to share danger, privation and death for and with his men there was always the most unbounded loyalty. If he gave himself to them they would defend him with their last drop of blood. And Christ gave Himself utterly—even unto death. His whole life was one great upgiving till at last on the cross He made the great sacrifice. Every soldier who died on the battlefield gave himself for all of us. We are all his debtors. And we are all Christ's debtors. He died for all. He died for us. And so by that amazing love, ending in that amazing sacrifice, bringing to us the life that is life indeed, He is the only Leader and Saviour of the new age.[1]

The Wilderness and the Spirit.

Luke iv. 1.—'And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness.'

THE narrative of the Temptation must have been told to the disciples by Christ Himself; there is no other source from which they can have obtained it. It is His own narration, of course in parable, of the spiritual struggles through which He passed at the opening of His ministry. And the Temptation derives its significance from the moment when it occurred; it came immediately after the Baptism, at which He had heard the voice from heaven which said, 'Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.' We need not pause to ask whether that represents the first moment at which our Lord reached the conviction that He was the Messiah, or only the moment when He felt called to take up His Messianic work. In any case it marks the end of His life in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth, and the beginning of His public ministry. And at that time He felt Himself driven into the wilderness; the Gospels do not represent it as a deliberate withdrawal into solitude, that He may work out His problems; an overmastering impulse took possession of Him. St. Mark, in particular, gives this impression: 'And straightway the Spirit driveth him forth into the wilderness.'

There are two facts in the text—the wilderness and the Holy Spirit. These two facts mean that temptation comes to the lonely, and to those who are full of the Holy Spirit.

1. The idea of *loneliness* is suggested by the place where the Temptation is said to have occurred—the wilderness. But it might almost as well have been suggested by the time; for there was no period of His life when Jesus was more utterly alone than this, when He was breaking away from old associations—from the circle of life in which His mother and His brethren moved, from ideas and customs familiar to Him from His boyhood—and when He was setting Himself, as John had done before Him, in opposition to authorities and systems to which the vast majority of His kindred and His nation bowed. He had no disciples clustered round Him yet; He was just at that juncture where the past with its sympathies was slipping from Him, and the future sympathies were undeveloped. The loneliness, therefore, was of the very essence of the temptation. A revolution such as this that was now dawning upon the race never finds its first expression in the multitude. The vague, undefined, half-formed ideas and aspirations which are floating in the mind of the generation need to be focussed before they can become effective. And not until some master-mind gathers those ideas and aspirations in his own person to one burning point, do they burst forth into the flame that kindles the ages and renews the world.

[1] A. R. Henderson.

And when that happens the first thing is that the man has to go alone. He has to go alone and ponder. The old ideas must be questioned and the new explored. The active life must come to a pause, and the spirit must seek silently, painfully, for the right lines of action. The conscience must test the plans that suggest themselves, and the will must nerve itself to thrust aside that which is attractive and mischievous, and to accept submissively that which is sober, unattractive, painful, but which is, nevertheless, right.

¶ It is in solitude that we discover the secret of detachment, and realize that supreme relationship which is the fount at once of greatness and peace—the relationship of the individual soul and God. . . . Solitude is necessary for communion with God. It is in silence that the final truths assert and reveal themselves. . . . It is through the intuitions of silence—the deep soul-convictions which escape words and cannot brook the atmosphere of the crowd and its chatter—that we reach God.[1]

2. But the Temptation came to Jesus when He was '*full of the Holy Ghost.*' It is well-known that a period of ecstasy is commonly followed by a period of depression. There are physical reasons for this—and perhaps there are spiritual too. But neither does this go to the bottom of the matter. This was not one of those ebb-tides of the spirit that follow upon the flow of inspiration—the tide was still at the full. It was not with Jesus—as it was with Paul—the case of a messenger of Satan sent to buffet Him. It was He who went Himself to meet the messenger, went straight from Jordan, and 'full of the Holy Ghost.' Let us take bolder ground, and say that Jesus was tempted *because* He was full of the Holy Ghost. If He had not been full of the Holy Ghost He would not have been tempted. Temptation is the conflict of the higher with the lower. It is because we have received a vision of the higher, because we have seen those greater possibilities of life, that temptation is possible to us.

In our decent and orderly life, with home-comforts and rational amusements and friends and companions of our choosing, there is very little temptation to vice or to positive wickedness, and so we are apt to think that the strong language which is used about temptation is mere exaggeration. We are apt to think that the kind of talk that is constantly indulged in from the pulpit about sin and about spiritual conflict is artificial and conventional. Perhaps to some extent it is so. But there is this to be said and taken to heart—the life that goes in such an even course, that is so respectable and so contented, very often owes its freedom from conflict to the absence of any high ambition or any enthusiastic devotion to principle. Vices are, after all, not the only things that a man needs to strive against. A man, if he be worthy of the name, will strive against the low utilitarian view of life, the selfish contentment with personal comfort, the love of money and ease and material good. And if we have no ideal higher than these it is no wonder that our lives are free from temptation. It is when a high ideal comes to a man that temptation begins. The ideal will continually be driving him against the prejudices and the low day-by-day views of other men. People will not be able quite to make him out. They will feel that he is not altogether one with them. The dead weight of the world, the inertia of received opinion, will begin to drag. And then comes the temptation to accept the world's average and content himself with a low estimate of life and its ambitions.

(1) Take the temptation that came to Jesus to turn stones into bread when He was an hungered. It does not matter in what precise form the temptation came; but in some form this idea was suggested to Jesus—to use His powers not for mankind but for Himself; to employ His power in getting His own bread, and feeding His own soul, and alleviating His own condition. That is a temptation that could come only to a man who was 'returning from Jordan full of the Holy Ghost.' It is a thing that could never appear in the light of a temptation except to a man who had an extraordinary standard of human duty. Why should Christ not turn stones into bread if He can? Why should He not use His powers for His comfort and advantage? Has not every man a natural right, as we are continually being told, to the fruits of his own labour, whether of mind or of body? Yes, he has—until he has discovered a more excellent way. But that more excellent way Christ had discovered and, therefore, to Him

[1] Archbishop Lang.

it was not lawful. He had become possessed with the idea that a man's gifts are to be used not for himself but for the common good; that genius and talent are not a man's own property but the property of mankind, and received from God simply as a trust to be used on behalf of mankind.

¶ Of Jenny Lind, the great singer, we read that she had an intense conviction that her art was a gift of God, to be dedicated to His service. This belief was continually on her lips. 'I have always put God first,' she said, during her last days. It was this which you could feel in her pose, as she stood, high-strung and prophetic, to deliver a great theme, such as 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' It was this which was the key to her superb generosity to the sick and the suffering; she was fulfilling her consecrated office towards them. It was this which sent her voice thrilling along the wards of the Brompton Hospital, where she loved to sing to those for whom she had herself built a whole wing. It was this which kindled all her enthusiasm for Mlle. Janotha, in whom she found a kindred mind—Janotha who had said to her (she told me), 'What is this "world" of which people speak? I do not know what "the world" is. I play for Jesus Christ.'[1]

(2) Again, there is the temptation to fall down and worship Satan—the spirit of the world, the spirit of cruel force. Satan shows Jesus all the kingdoms of the world, presents to His mind a vast dominion of nations, and says to Him: 'You desire to win a kingdom for Israel; to restore the chosen people to their rightful inheritance. Well, there is one way to do it—do as the Romans do, do as all the world does, use force; raise a revolt, follow in the steps of the Maccabees, adopt the world's principle of "might is right,"; recognize the supremacy of physical force, and then all that you desire shall be accomplished, and the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord.' That is, perhaps, the meaning of the temptation. And here again the thing could not have appeared in the light of a temptation to any other man. To raise a revolt against the Romans, to win the kingdoms of the world to Israel and Israel's God, to go forth upon a sacred war as did the Muhammadans, and the Crusaders in after times—why, that to any other man would have appeared a noble, a patriotic, a lofty purpose, an evidence of piety and courage. Our ideas of the evil of war, it must be remembered, are quite a modern growth; in that day it was the normal state. There was, perhaps, no other soul then breathing to whom the matter would have assumed the hue of sin. But Jesus was full of the Holy Ghost, and that altered everything. He was inspired with a new and a higher principle, and, therefore, this accepted principle of appeal to force seemed wrong—seemed to be a worshipping of Satan. 'Get thee behind me, Satan,' He said, 'for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God'—thou shalt worship spiritual, not physical force; thou shalt worship love, not power—'and him only shalt thou serve.'

(3) Lastly, take the third temptation—the temptation to fanaticism—to cast Himself headlong into danger and trust to the angels to preserve Him. Here again we see the temptation coming from the very religiousness of the nature and the high ambitions of the life. *We* are not tempted to fanaticism. We are quite rational, quite calm and collected in our religion. But perhaps that is because our religion is not deep enough or wide enough to have any very large billows on its surface. Perhaps the reason why we are so careful not to dash our foot against a stone is that we do not believe that the angels have any 'charge over us to keep us'; do not believe, perhaps, that there is any Providence at all that is much concerned about us. A cold and passionless religion is not likely to run into any danger of fanaticism. But to some of us it would be a sign of grace if we were a little more tempted in that direction—if only we had religion enough to make fanaticism possible.

¶ 'I once remarked to Bramwell Booth . . . that enthusiasm is a highly dangerous thing. He made answer, "Not if you organize it." The reader must bear in mind that while General Booth was doing all in his power to overcome the torpor and apathy of the world by an excess of religious fervour, he was also at the same time organizing and controlling the enthusiasm which resulted. From the very first, with more than one shrewd mind helping him, the General set about organizing the zeal and fervour of his followers. He called men and women by the most violent means to his side, but once at his side he disciplined them into orderly legions. Extreme

[1] H. Scott Holland, *Personal Studies*, 21.

as some of his utterances seem, fanatical as indeed some of his methods appear, he was yet in some strange fashion the most practical, level-headed, and far-seeing of Englishmen, a man typical of our manufacturing Midlands. He had a detecting instinct for cant, a violent detestation for professional unction, and a perfect loathing for the pernicious egoism of certain religious bodies. . . . Many hard phrases did he rap out when approached by men obsessed by introspective religion. He had one test, an infallible and a scriptural test, for all talkers: "What do you *do*? What are you willing to give up?" He cut short those who wanted to discuss doctrinal refinements with the instruction, "Go and do something." '[1]

Spirituality.

Luke iv. 2.—'Forty days tempted of the devil.'

ST. LUKE differs from St. Matthew in the order of the second and third Temptations. This seems at first sight, as Dr. Salmon suggests in *The Human Element in the Gospels,* to be a mere slip of memory, going back to the time when the story circulated from mouth to mouth, and had not yet been committed to writing. And yet we may well feel that this is not an altogether satisfactory solution of the difficulty. We are grateful, therefore, to Dr. Westcott for suggesting, in his *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels,* a clue to the significance of the changed order. Dr. Westcott regards the Temptations in St. Luke's arrangement as exhibiting the stages of growing intensity in the trial, piercing deeper and deeper into the hidden world of personality within.

There are one or two features common to both Evangelists, to which it will be well to call attention before we commence an examination of each temptation in detail.

(1) The first is this: Each temptation is directly addressed to the Lord's Messianic consciousness. Each is concerned with various methods of proving or of exercising His Divine Sonship, and of claiming and taking possession of His Kingdom. Each presupposes a consciousness of the possession of supernatural power. If, then, we are right in concluding that the narrative comes from our Lord Himself, we have in it direct evidence that from the commencement of His public ministry Jesus knew Himself to be the Messiah, knew that the exercise of supernatural power was to be an integral part of His work in revealing the Father and in establishing His Kingdom.

(2) The second point is this: The Tempter is in each case vanquished by a word from the Bible. The Lord overcomes by the help of the lessons written for the learning of all men in the storehouse of the past spiritual experience of God's people. These lessons He must have mastered during His waiting time. The key to the understanding of each stage in the conflict lies in the text which the Lord applies to it.

With these considerations in mind, let us study the three temptations in St. Luke's order.

1. Our Lord was first tempted to be *unspiritual.* He was a young man, barely thirty years of age. A big sense of vocation was upon Him. He was possessed by the awful consciousness that He was born to be the Saviour of His people. And along what line should the vocation be pursued? How should He set about the redemption of men? The question haunted Him morning, noon, and night, and He withdrew into the wilderness, that He might brood on it free from the distractions of men. Now it is wonderful how in such a mood some immediate association of circumstances gives the requisite touch to uncertain thoughts, and contributes a point of convergence through which they pass to definite judgment. It was when John Bright was in the cold loneliness of a great bereavement that Cobden came upon him, and, through his own chilling sorrow Bright felt the hunger of a nation, and he consecrated himself as the apostle of reform. And while our Lord was brooding in the wilderness He began to hunger, and it was this very hunger that became the medium of a temptation through which He passed to clear and definite vocation. While He hungered, the devil came to Him, and reminded Him of the widespread hunger in the land, and of social inequalities, the difficulty with which some men found their bread, and the oppression under which they groaned day by day. 'Thy vocation is to be a physical reformer! It is Thine to bring the

[1] H. Begbie, *Life of William Booth,* i. 457.

people bread! Let that be Thy destiny! Choose that as Thy road! Set up the standard of social reform, and live, and labour, and die for social emancipation!' It was a temptation to ignore the distinctively spiritual, and to give Himself to purely materialistic ends.

And what was the Lord's answer? 'Man shall not live by bread *alone*.' Not that our Lord ignores the necessity of bread, but He refuses to give it exclusive emphasis: He declines to be imprisoned within its narrow limits. 'But by every word of God.' Man can live fully only in the intellectual, and moral, and spiritual, in the realm of thought and ideal, in revelation and inspiration. 'Not by bread alone,' but by work. 'Not by bread alone,' but by service. 'Not by bread alone,' but by sacrifice. 'Not by bread alone,' but by communion with the living God.

Now this temptation is ever with us, and it was never more powerful than it is to-day. There is always a temptation to make the Alpha the Omega as well, to make the physical our ultimate concern. It is so in our daily life, and in our social service. We are tempted to shut out the heavenlies and to close all the upper rooms in the temple of our life, to live entirely in the basement, to pile up money, to seek material concerns, and with these to be content. It is the temptation to ignore the spiritual, to shut it out of our life.

¶ It is little wonder that pessimism is the logical outcome of a life given over to mere personal pleasure and spectacular amusement. The spirit that says, 'Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die,' is not the spirit that is laying hold on any of the things that make life worth the living. Where life represents nothing but the worship of the body—that it shall be well cared for, well clad, and constantly amused—it is little wonder that there can be no conviction of immortality, or perhaps hardly the wish for it. The first cause of all discontent, all weariness, all jealousy, bitterness, and vanity of life is materialism. It is the corrosive element that rusts away all the pure gold of energy and of aspiration.[1]

2. In the second temptation the devil attempts a compromise, and seeks to entice our Lord to be *semi-spiritual*, half one thing and half another. He led our Lord up an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. 'All these shall be Thine if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.' Now the subtlety of the temptation is this, that it was our Lord's vocation to make those kingdoms His own. And how should He set about it? Well, how was He expected to do it? He was expected to appear as a literal king, robed in worldly pomp and magnificence, an imperial Cæsar, before whom the reigning Cæsar would be belittled and eclipsed. He was expected to appear in such overwhelming power and sovereignty that the peoples would fear Him and prostrate themselves at His feet. And the devil lays hold of the popular expectation, and seductively whispers it in the ears of the Christ: 'Would not that be the better way, and the best way? We are both at one about the end! And here is the short cut to dominion! Take the worldly way to the unworldly end. It is only a matter of means, and by common admission this is the most hopeful way to attain the desired ends.' That was the temptation, a temptation to compromise. The right end was allowed, but the enticement was to take the devil's way to it. It was a temptation to be semi-spiritual, to give part to God and part to mammon.

And what was the answer to it? 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.' It is not permissible to give worship here and service there. Our worship and service must be indissoluble. We must not 'fear the Lord and serve our own gods.' Spiritual ends must be served by spiritual means.

And the old temptation is with us still. How frequently we are led to assume that the end justifies the means, and that it is legitimate to seek spiritualities by paying homage to an adversary. We try to serve the Lord's end by ministries of persecution; that is to say, by invoking the brutal legions of the world. The Church is sometimes tempted, and never more so than now, to reach spiritual ends by vulgar means, to pursue the redemptive purpose by worldly smartness and unhallowed skill. Half and half we are tempted to be. The final word about it is just this: kingdoms won in this way have been spoiled in the winning, and when we enter we shall find the flag of the devil flying over the field.

[1] L. Whiting, *The World Beautiful*, 95.

¶ The spirit of compromise is everywhere in the world. There is no end of examples; they abound throughout our daily experience. The spirit of immoral compromise can always be detected by the cant phrases it affects; such as 'It's of no use trying to alter it'; 'They all do it'; 'It is the custom of the trade'; 'One must live'; 'Don't be a faddist'; 'The idea is Utopian.' These, and others like them, are the stock phrases of the baser sort of the worldly-wise. They all amount to this confession, that evil is too strongly entrenched to be uprooted; it must be tolerated; and, further, that if you want to get on in the world you must not be over-precise, or you will lose your influence, and then you will do no good at all. What is this but the very suggestion of Satan: 'All this power will I give thee; . . . for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.' [1]

¶ Marlowe and Goethe in their plays make it appear as though the great temptation were to something manifestly monstrous and horrific, a hideous pact with Satan, writ and signed in a man's own blood. But Clough, though not to be named as a poet with these two, comes nearer the truth when, in his curious poem 'Dipsychus,' he makes the man who is tempted ask the evil spirit:

> Say what were your demands? what were your terms?
> What should I do? what should I cease to do?
> *Religion goes, I take it.*

The answer is:

> . . . . . Oh,
> You'll go to church, of course, you know;
> Or at the least will take a pew,
> Trust me, I make a point of that,
> *No* infidelity, that's flat.[2]

3. In the third temptation our Lord was tempted to be *unreasonably and stupidly spiritual.* He was taken to a pinnacle of the Temple. He was surrounded by externalisms, all of which were fragrant of religion. The Temple, the Scriptures, a holy promise, the spirit of trust! The devil now appears as the minister of spiritual culture, a tutor in the art of fittingly expressing the soul's confidence and love. He is now engaged in giving a lesson on how to become more religious. 'There is a crowd below Thee. They are doubtful of Thy credentials. They know Thee to be the Man of Nazareth, they cannot accept Thee as the Son of God. Here is a simple way to decide it and to win their enthusiastic confidence. Throw Thyself from the height! Angel guards shall catch Thee in mid-air. Thou shalt not dash Thy foot against a stone. And at once Thou shalt be acclaimed King by an enthusiastic people.'

And what is the answer to the temptation? 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' Such an exhibition is not trust, but presumption. It is not piety, but stupidity. It is spirituality devoid of reasonableness; it is piety bereft of common sense. It is faith perverted into presumption. It is the shutting of the eyes, it is a criminally blind dependence upon the love of God. It is a temptation always near, and the answer of the Lord is our only response to it. If we wish to have the redemption of God's holy promises, it is imperative that we be reasonable, and that we exercise a sane and healthy judgment. No one conciliates the Lord by silly childishness, and by an abnegation of common sense. The condition of Divine help is the consecration of our own best to His service. And in the scope of our consecration judgment is included, and conscience, and enlightened affection. 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.'

¶ In the Soldier's Pocket Book the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army declares that soldiers, like missionaries, must be fanatics. That is probably the ideal for a soldier, but as to missionaries I beg the Commander-in-Chief's pardon when I deny his statement. A fanatic is a man who has exaggerated and excited notions, and that is just what a missionary must not be. Nor must any intelligent Christian be a fanatic. Christ turned His back on that way and we must follow. If we attempt to work miracles and put them forth as the sign of our doctrine, the Egyptians will do likewise with their enchantments. Not all the wonders we can accumulate will do as much to bring men to God as the sweet, gentle influence of a good life lived in the faith of Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit. 'If they

[1] E. L. Hicks, *Addresses on the Temptation*, 53.
[2] J. M. Gibbon, *Evangelical Heterodoxy*, 32.

hear not Moses and the prophets neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead'; indeed, One has risen from the dead and yet men do not believe.[1]

Temptation by the Devil.

Luke iv. 2.—'Tempted of the devil.'

WHAT evidence is there for the existence of angels, good or evil? What ground have we in reason or nature for accepting the statement that suggestions of sin were borne in from outside upon a human spirit, and were even pressed upon the consciousness of our sinless Saviour by a spiritual Prince of Evil?

To ask such questions is to open a large subject, to go down to the very roots of our Christian faith. We do not say that a man cannot be a good Christian without believing in the devil and his angels. We welcome as Christ's all who will deny themselves and take up His cross and follow Him. But we cannot conceal from ourselves that Christian tradition from the first accepted the belief of the Jews upon this subject, purifying that belief indeed and idealizing it, perhaps, in some particulars, yet accepting it upon the whole as a statement of spiritual fact. To one, therefore, who doubts the competence of psychology or metaphysics to give an adequate answer to enquiries respecting moral and spiritual phenomena, and who is ready to accept the guidance of Christ as to the things of God as sufficing at least for present needs, the narrative of the Temptation offers no serious difficulty; and this for three reasons.

1. We must guard ourselves against the delusive antithesis of the terms *natural* and *supernatural*. These adjectives are in fact what a great logician called 'question-begging epithets'; they insinuate a fallacy. The spiritual, if it exists, is as natural as anything else that Divine Wisdom has made and sustains. The true antithesis is between the visible and the invisible, the spiritual and the material. There is absolutely nothing in the facts of nature, as we know them, to forbid our conceiving of spiritual beings, created as we are, yet unlike ourselves in belonging only to a spiritual order of things, and therefore imperceptible to our outward senses. If their existence is affirmed by evidence that claims our respect, there is nothing to hinder our belief. It needs verification indeed. But it is wholly a question of evidence, and evidence of this kind is confessedly hard to seek. Only we who are ready to allow the claim of Christ as a Teacher sent from God—nay, as the Son of God in a supreme and unique sense—may be willing to accept on His authority the belief in the existence of angelic beings.

¶ I believe it is mercy that our eyes are shut to save us from angel-worship; for I so believe in the ministry of angels, that I do not know but if I saw them I might be led to give them homage. We must beware, in this matter of the intervention of angels, of two extremes—of a vulgar credulity and a presumptive incredulity. We live in an age in which we should say it *may* be so; and neither that it *must* be so, nor that it *cannot* be so. I'm fond of the caveats. Why should they not be delegated to interfere? Some subordinate agents between God and man there surely are. And if there be a hierarchy rising upwards to the throne, and Him who sits on it, may not the angels be often sent to minister to those on the earth who need their succour? My homage to the supernatural would lead me to believe in angels, even though I had no revelation on the subject; and every suggestion of the unseen is precious, every door opening into it.[1]

2. But our acceptance of our Lord's authority in this matter does not imply all that it is sometimes thought to imply. Religious humility, as well as intellectual caution, will prevent our deeming the human mind capable of conceiving adequately the conditions of spiritual and supersensual existence. Not even Christ Himself could have supplied us with adequate ideas on this subject—not because He was unable to impart them, but because we are incapable of receiving them. We assume that the assertions made on the authority of Christ concerning the spiritual world have a real meaning; they represent facts, so far as we are capable of apprehending those facts. But it is possible that, when we are translated from this world of sense to the world of spirit, we shall discover that the essential facts them-

[1] W. Y. Fullerton, *Christ and Men*, 65.

[1] J. Duncan, *Colloquia Peripatetica*, 40.

selves are far more wonderful, and far more self-evident, than the faint conceptions which we formed of them ever led us to suppose. In other words, the representations of heaven, and of judgment, and of angels, from the lips of Christ, are like the descriptions of the great world and its institutions given by a wise and sympathetic adult to a simple, inquisitive child. The representations are true, not absolutely, but relatively; true, not in the literal details of the picture, but in respect of its light and shade and ethical colour. The teaching we have received is true, and yet may be only the symbol of the spiritual reality. 'For now we see by means of a mirror, in a riddle: but then face to face.'

3. And, further, the witness of Scripture to the existence of an external tempter is borne out by our inner experience. Those sudden gusts of passion, those horrible suggestions of evil, those insinuations of doubt, those painful passages of our spiritual life in which the whole fabric of our religious belief seems suddenly to totter and its very foundations to be cast down—those experiences are painful enough in themselves; but they lose half their horror and explain themselves in accordance with our inner conviction if they are really due to the malignity of a tempter playing upon the weakness and corruption of our hearts. That weakness may be largely due to our own fault, that corruption due to old indulgence in sin, old remissness in duty; yet we feel that there is a real and actual temptation—that a spiritual force of evil, not ourselves, is trying to make us its prey.

¶ Controversy apart, we have the 'devil,' at least as a word in our vocabulary, a much used and a most effective word. Take it as you will—for a principle of evil, for the fly in our moral ointment, for the inferior, the bad, as opposed to the good. Our theme will work itself out under any of these definitions. There is a something quite near enough to us which we have to be 'up against,' to resist and to fight, if we are to come to any good. We can accept a devil, as the late William Jones used to say, if only we keep our foot on his neck. Let us hope that if there be a personality of that name he will, as Robbie Burns has it, some day 'tak' a thought and men'.' The fact remains—the thing we have here to consider—that our adversary does take his toll; that all our good doing and good being is subject to a horrible discount; that our best, even in the hour of its victory, pays tribute to our worst; that our forward movement includes those manifold slips backward; that our success carries in it so often the seeds of defeat.[1]

The Book of Deuteronomy.

Luke iv. 4.—'It is written.'
Luke iv. 8.—'It is written.'
Luke iv. 12.—'It is said.'

EACH reply of the Saviour to the Tempter is taken from one and the same book of Scripture. Which is that? It is the Book of Deuteronomy, a book which many a casual reader of the Old Testament has passed over as being less important, less original, than other books. It contains no striking narrative; it seems to add nothing new. It includes, indeed, some curious fragments of early annals and it closes with some glorious pieces of old Hebrew poetry. But the main body of the book is made up of long discourses, supposed to be addressed by Moses to the Israelites shortly before his death. It is a volume of discourses, of sermons; and sermons, more quickly than most things in literature, grow out of date.

And yet every expert student is aware that Deuteronomy is the most spiritual book of the Old Testament. It breathes the spirit of the greatest prophets. Nowhere is there a higher conception of the nature and will of God, or a clearer view of love as the mainspring of obedience. In the Book of Deuteronomy we come nearer than anywhere else in the Old Testament to the teaching of the New. And this is why our Lord loved the book, and used it so wonderfully.

For, apart from the use made of it in the Temptation, we find our Lord quoting Deuteronomy at least thrice. From Deut. xv. 11—a passage well worth attentive study—came our Lord's saying, 'the poor ye have always with you.' Another passage of Deuteronomy (vi. 4-9): 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart,' etc., was selected by later Israel for daily recitation by every pious Jew, as summing up in an inspired formula the essence of his faith

[1] J. Brierley, *Faith's Certainties*, 89

and duty: and it is not a little remarkable that our Lord employs this passage on two occasions: once when asked, 'Which is the great commandment in the law?' (Matt. xxii. 36), and again in replying to the lawyer who enquired of Him, 'What shall I do to inherit eternal life?' (Lk. x. 25). Nor will readers of Romans (x. 8f.) forget the magnificent use which St. Paul makes of that sublime text of Deut. xxx. 11f., which describes the spiritual indwelling of the law of God: 'For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.'

1. Never, perhaps, since the Reformation has the Bible been less read, less widely known among the mass of Christian people, than at this hour. What is the cause of this neglect? It is a very serious fact, and must be completely altered if an enlightened and devout Christianity is ever again to recover and retain its hold upon the English people. In part the reason is found in the manifold and clamorous demands of other studies, and of the ephemeral press. In other words, we live so much in the present and the actual that we have little time for things distant in time or interest, and certainly not for the indirect teachings (for such they are) of Holy Scripture. Put in another form, this means that we are so much absorbed in things material that the ideal and the spiritual cease to have a compelling attraction for us. All this may be very largely true. But it would be at once more interesting and far more helpful if we could put our finger upon the immediate reasons for this neglect, and so suggest a remedy.

(1) The average man of to-day feels a recoil from the study of Holy Scripture, and especially of the Old Testament, from two causes. In the first place, he feels dazed and confused by the multifariousness of Scripture. He expected to read a book, and he finds himself in a library. He is lost in the largeness and the variety of the whole literature. He needs a principle of selection, a point of view, some guidance through the seeming labyrinth.

(2) In the second place, he feels embarrassed by the prominence of the miraculous and wonderful in the narratives. His own experience of the common round of life in no way prepares him for such a situation. The ethical interest of Scripture impresses him indeed; and its biographies even delight him with their personal charm. But he is struck with an air of aloofness from ordinary life, an unreality, due to the prevalence of the miraculous. He is sorry that the presence of the spiritual should involve the emergence of the supernatural. For he craves for something that shall touch the deepest chords of his being—the conscience and the will—and bring heaven and earth together by the spell of moral sympathy.

2. Now in the Book of Deuteronomy we have the very specific for the disease. The book so signally honoured by our Lord affords us just the help we want.

(1) In the first place, it has been shown by recent research to be, not a secondary book, but a book of primary importance. It is no mere 'second edition of the Law' or 'Deuteronomy' (as the Septuagint by an inaccurate rendering of ch. xvii. 18 suggests). Rather it is one of the freshest, most original, and even singular, of all the Old Testament books. Its very history is a romance. For most scholars now recognize in Deuteronomy the identical 'Book of the Law' which was found in the Temple in the 18th year of King Josiah (2 Kings xxii.). We know how both king and people were stirred and alarmed by its perusal; how the reforms it enjoined were at once carried into effect, and thus changed the character of Hebrew religion for ever, purifying and also centralizing it; how the spirit of the book infused itself into all succeeding scriptures. Deuteronomy breathes the lofty moral sentiments of a Hosea, a Micah, an Isaiah. It embodies their spirit in a style suited to everyday life and to the average Hebrew. But, if prophetic in spirit, it is not so in its form. For it avoids the passionate moods, the daring imagery of the prophets, and expresses itself in prose. That prose is indeed of the noblest and most serious kind; it throbs with emotion, but its style is that of a refined and chastened

rhetoric. We know not who was the author, though we can fix his date within narrow limits. Perhaps he wrote it in the evil days of King Manasseh, when in secret companionship with other faithful souls he kept alive his own faith and theirs by depicting in these pages the spirit and conduct of an ideal Israelite. The book makes no pretence of being *written* by Moses. It only professes to be a record, by a later pen, of the last exhortations addressed by Moses to Israel at the close of the wilderness wanderings. There is nothing outwardly original in the book. It borrows its history from older documents which we can yet trace amid the highly composite narratives of the Pentateuch. It selects its rules of law from older codes. The magnificent poems that close the book come, no doubt, from older national collections. But that which is original in Deuteronomy is the lofty conception of God's purity, patience, and love, and of Israel's relation to his God. For Israel is God's child, and God is a Father to Israel. Moreover, unlike many of the books of the Old Testament, Deuteronomy has undergone little or no revision since it left its author's hand. It stands in our Bible substantially in the form in which it was found so strangely in the year 621 B.C. Its very history, as we said, is a romance. And by its date and character it steps at once into prominence as a central book of Holy Scripture.

Every book of the Old Testament takes its place as viewed in relation to Deuteronomy. It has none of the crudity of thought and expression which we note in the older portions of the Pentateuch; it has none of their anthropomorphism, little of their imperfect and provisional morality. As compared, again, with later books like Ezekiel and the later Priestly Codes, Deuteronomy is less Levitical, less careful of ceremonial. It is a manual not for priests but for the lay-folk, a manual to teach the average Hebrew his duties. And so Deuteronomy becomes a sort of touchstone of Old Testament Scripture; we can trace the development of Jewish literature by the way in which it led up to Deuteronomy or afterwards was influenced by Deuteronomy, whether in its characteristic phrases, or (still more) in its significant conceptions of Israel's relation to God. It is not too much to say that the right appreciation of the place of Deuteronomy in Jewish literature has given us a priceless key to the understanding of the origin, growth and meaning of the Old Testament books. We can now read them with a sense of their orderly sequence, their historical development.

(2) Again, the Deuteronomist shows no inclination to revel in the merely marvellous. His interest in the wonderful history of the Hebrews is purely ethical. The marvels of the Exodus, the deliverances in the wilderness, the strange vicissitudes that had made 'a Syrian ready to perish' (Deut. xxvi. 5) into a thriving and populous nation —all these are dwelt upon again and again, in varying terms, only to enforce the one central idea of God's electing love and Israel's corresponding obligation of loving and trustful obedience. Just as, in the legal portions of Deuteronomy, precisely those details of law seem to be selected which make for mercy and kindness to both man and beast, so the selection from the history of Israel seems made with the view of exhibiting Jehovah not as a God of Nature, but of Providence and Grace. Deuteronomy is a manual of practical theology for the plain man. It leavens every department of his life and conduct with the principle of Divine love, so that duty itself is transfigured into privilege, and privilege is made equivalent to duty, in the light of God's loving kindness.

Now it is precisely in this light, when we begin to grasp the ethical side of true theology, and feel drawn to God by the disclosure of His love, that there dawns upon us the reasonableness even of miracle, the *naturalness* (if we may so phrase it) of the supernatural. For, true religion being always the unveiling of God's character and the working of His love, it is hard to see how His love and power could have been disclosed to us in the way of Grace as contrasted with Nature without the accompaniment of much that is marvellous to man. There can be no true religion, we assume, without mystery; for man is not equal with God. On the other hand, few things are more destructive to religion than to subordinate its ethical and spiritual instincts to the mere emotion of wonder. Christianity is not, nor can be made to be, a mere marvel-monger. 'Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe,' said Christ, reprovingly. 'The Jews require a sign' (complains St. Paul), 'and the Greeks seek after wisdom:

but we preach Christ crucified.' That is, it is the moral grandeur and unique wisdom of Jesus Christ that constitutes the central wonder of the gospel.

¶ Why do men feel themselves drawn so easily to believe in the miraculous, the breaking forth of the divine through what are called the invariable laws of nature? Why is this faith found in the early history of all nations? 'Tis surely 'the divinity that stirs within us,' the conviction in man that occasions may arise when these laws may be interrupted. If there be a principle in man which leads him to believe in fixed laws of the universe, as there certainly is, there is also a principle that leads him to believe that there is something above these laws by which they may be controlled, and the philosophers of unbroken succession are bound to take note of this principle. It is part of a man's nature and must be accounted for. It may be said men put the supernatural still in the past, away from their own age. Let it be so. It shows the feeling that the natural must find its origin somewhere in the supernatural, that things have not been always as we see them.[1]

¶ The world is prone to love wonders; it cares much more for the miracle than for the power which the miracle discloses, or the truth which it reveals. It has been in every age the anguish of the worker of wonders that he was sought as a magician rather than as a revealer of the mystery of life.[2]

3. So, then, this Book of Deuteronomy, both as a central and illuminating land-mark in Jewish literature and as the loftiest embodiment of Old Testament theology and ethics, assumes a singular value for the modern reader of Scripture. It idealizes Judaism: it shows the essential meaning of Judaism as a religion for the individual and the nation. It lifts to the highest level the provisional and progressive morality of the Old Testament.

It is just because the Old Testament appears to many to lack this advanced and concentrated ethical fervour, this sense of Divine compassion, this conception of man's loving relations to God, that men seem disinclined to approach it. The whole of the Old Testament assumes a new meaning for us in the light of this interesting book; for it affords a clue to the development of religion among the Hebrews; it points us along the line of their progressive morality; and it no less certainly sums up for us the religious teaching of their great prophetic order.

If we are to be emancipated from a hard and gross materialism, if as individuals we are to live by faith, and as a nation and empire to cultivate true ideals of righteousness, of responsibility and compassion, it must be by returning to Holy Scripture with enlightened, devout, and serious study. It is not a question of one literature being inspired and another uninspired. It is not a question of mere authority. The question is, what is the literature, where is the written word, in which the human conscience—individual or collective—finds the loftiest appeals, the most simple and searching challenge, the most powerful spur and guidance? If these are what we seek—and we need nothing so much—they are found pre-eminently in Holy Writ. They are found elsewhere, in their degree, wherever man's heart has borne articulate witness to ethical truth; but nowhere are they so concentrated in force, so cumulative in effect, so authoritative in spiritual claim, as in Scripture. The neglect of Scripture is a painful token of national decline. We were once, we English, a Bible-reading, a Bible-loving people. We too proudly deem that our fathers worshipped the letter of Scripture overmuch; we profess to prefer its spirit. We have need to set ourselves, far more than we are doing, to learn its letter, before we aspire to evince its spirit and purpose.

¶ She [Mary Slessor] had always been an earnest and intelligent student of the Bible, and to her it grew more wonderful every day. . . . Her own reading of it was mainly accomplished in the early morning. As soon as there was light enough—which was usually about 5.30—she took a fine pen and her Bible and turned to the book she was studying in the Old or New Testament. She underlined the governing words and sentences as she went along in her endeavour to grasp the meaning of the writer and the course of his argument; word by word, sentence by sentence, she patiently followed his thought. Sometimes it would be three days before she completed a chapter, but she would not leave it until she had some

[1] J. Ker, *Thoughts for Heart and Life*, 141.
[2] H. W. Mabie, *My Study Fire*, ii. 60.

kind of idea as to its purpose. She was her own commentator, and on the margin she noted the truths she had learned, the lessons she had received, her opinions about the sentiment expressed, or the character described. If her expositions were not according to the ordinary canons of exegesis, they had the merit of being simple, fresh, and unconventional. . . . When one Bible was finished she began another, and repeated the process, for she found that new thoughts came as the years went by. . . . Such sedulous study had its effect upon her character and life; she was interpenetrated with the spirit of the Book; it gave her direction in all her affairs—in her difficult palavers she would remark, 'Let us see what the Bible says on this point'—it inspired her with hope, faith, and courage. Often after an hour or two of meditation over it she felt no desire for ordinary literature, all other books seeming tame and tasteless after its pages.[1]

The Devil's.

Luke iv. 5-7.—'And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.'

NEVER was such a bribe offered to any man. It is hard for us to understand how great a bribe it was. It is no great advantage to be a king to-day—unless it be a copper king or a railway king. The sovereignty of England is a hard task, full of labour rather than luxury, even its pleasures being exposed to the fierce light that beats upon a throne. It was very different two thousand years ago. Then kingship meant real power, real wealth, real self-indulgence. The king was in a better position than any other to satisfy all his desires, for he was a tyrant accountable to none. When the devil offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world, he therefore offered to give Him power to do anything in the world that He desired to do. He offered to Him the control of all the armies, money, and wisdom of the Roman Empire, the Persian Empire, the Indian Empire, the Chinese Empire, and every other despotism in the world. That was the splendid promise. It had but one small condition attached to it—'worship before me' (R.V.). There is no stringent definition of that worship. He did not say 'keep on worshipping,' or 'use the power I shall give you to make your subjects worship me.' He did not say, 'proclaim the fact that you have worshipped me to all the world.' No, all he required was that Jesus should worship him there in that lonely place, far from His friends, with none to watch Him but the stars—surely a small sin, a very venial wrongdoing! A small price to pay for so great a boon! A tiny sin—fall down and worship the devil; a magnificent reward—all the kingdoms of the world with their authority and glory.

But this magnificent bribe was founded upon a lie—a splendid, a glittering lie, but nevertheless a lie. And the lie is a double one, for neither are the authority and glory of the world in the keeping of the devil, nor, consequently, is he able to bestow them on those who worship him.

1. At first sight, it seems as though what the devil said was true. For Jesus, having refused to worship the devil, never was able to grip the authority and glory of the world during His life. There is no more pathetic story in all the world's history than that of the failure of Jesus to gain any worldly authority and glory. Twenty-five years ago there used to walk near the place where I lived a strange man who said strange things. His long black hair hung about his shoulders; his calm, but piercing, black eyes were full of wild fire; he proclaimed himself to be a prophet from God, and he announced the coming destruction of London. Crowds followed him, but generally to scoff and abuse him. He was poor and lonely, and at length died in an obscure asylum, an outcast, and reputed mad. The life of Jesus must have appeared quite like that to most of His contemporaries. He was an outcast. He was despised. He was poor. He was finally deserted. He was thought to be mad. He was destroyed by the authority and glory of this world.[1]

Nor must it be supposed that Jesus willingly resigned the power to do what He wished to do. He longed to be able to do great things in the world. We all remember the incident to-

[1] *Mary Slessor of Calabar*, 297.

[1] N. H. Marshall.

wards the end of His career, when He stood on the hills overlooking Jerusalem, and cried out, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!' The devil's threat seems to be completely carried out, and his promise justified. Jesus refused to worship, and He died alone, apparently a pathetic failure. The authority and glory of the world not only never became His, but actually caused the downfall and destruction, for a time, of all His influence in the world.

Again, when we look at the great princes of the world it does seem as though they got their power by worshipping the devil. One instance will suffice. The greatest despot of modern times was Napoleon Bonaparte. More than any other man in history he became possessed of the authority and glory of the world. And it must also be said that the method he employed and the spirit he displayed show him to have worshipped the devil. He was controlled by no scruple or faith in God, though superstitious to an astonishing degree and believing in an overruling fate. Mercy and equity were as foreign to his nature as devoutness or humility. The destruction of his private enemies he undertook as ruthlessly as the massacre of his public foes, and he kept faith only when it was politic, being as ready to adopt a new wife or a new religion in order to increase his worldly power as he was to neglect the imperative appeals of morality. Napoleon had had his temptation in the wilderness. In poverty and disappointment the devil had offered him wealth and position if he would worship him. And worship him he did, casting aside the generous patriotism of his Corsican boyhood, and turning his arms against his own people. He worshipped the devil, and became the very embodiment of the authority and glory of the world.

And so the promise of the Evil One to Jesus seems to be genuine and reliable. Jesus, who refused to do his bidding, lost all that His supreme genius might have given Him of worldly authority and glory. Napoleon, who from his early manhood allied himself with wickedness, rose to the very pinnacle of worldly aggrandizement.

2. Yet this promise was but a lie—a splendid lie! It was only for a moment and only in appearance that Jesus was defeated and cast down. In reality and for ever He has all authority and all glory. It is not the devil, it is Jesus who triumphs, and who ever will triumph. No wonder the Evil One offered to bribe our Lord—he knew that unless Jesus could be turned from His purpose the human race would be saved. He wanted to make peace and save his power by a compromise before war could dethrone him. He trusted to diplomacy—and it was he who failed, not Jesus. True, for thirty years our Lord was poor and humble and unknown, for three years He was outcast, suffering, and was finally killed. But what has happened since? These nineteen hundred years are the history of the gradual transference of the authority and glory of the world from evil to righteousness, from hatred to love, from the devil to Jesus. We sometimes feel despondent and are inclined to pessimism as we see how largely evil dominates society and nations to-day. But if we compare the history of the nineteenth century with that of the first century, we shall see that it is the optimist and not the pessimist who is in the right. When Jesus died, the very heavens became black, for the light of the world seemed to have gone out. On every throne sat lust and greed and cruelty and lies. The nations were submerged in sin. When Jesus rose again He began to lift the world out of sin, and gradually there has been created in the world the Christian conscience. It did not exist before. The Jews had it not, nor had the Romans, nor had the Chinese, for at the centre of the Christian conscience is the cross of Christ. And this Christian conscience, with the cross upon its bosom, is steadfastly and irresistibly turning the world upside down; and that sort of wickedness which was in the time of Christ common and commonplace now creates indignation and threatens revolution even if it occur so far from sight as the heart of Central Africa.

¶ One secret of the social efficiency of Christianity is to be found in its sympathy. It was largely this that in early Christian times won the day. 'It was by preaching to the poor, the burdened, and the outcaste, by the preaching and practice of love, that Christianity turned the stony, sterile world into the fruitful field of the

Church.' In practical sympathy, too, is to be found one of the differentiations of the Christian religion from others. Mozley asserts that ancient philosophy never opened up the mine of happiness that lay in sympathy, and that its discovery in and by Christianity was like that of a new scientific principle. And in the ancient religions and philosophies of Asia to-day, and in the people they dominate, sympathy is lacking. This is true of India, China, and Japan, and, indeed, of all non-Christian lands. Meredith Townsend, after long experience in India, wrote: 'In Asia . . . sympathy has yet to be born.' As to China, Dr. Arthur H. Smith, in his *Chinese Characteristics,* has a chapter on 'Absence of Sympathy,' and he affirms that sympathy is one of China's greatest needs. As to Japan, the people are manifestly a great people, with many admirable qualities—endurance, dutifulness, perseverance, patriotism—the best virtues of stoicism, but in the quality of compassion they come short. . . . Lafcadio Hearn will be accepted as a witness who is not likely to be quick to discover the faults of the Japanese, or eager to set them forth. He says: 'Western civilization is cultivating also, beyond any question, a capacity for tenderness the Orient knows nothing of. Tenderness is not of the Oriental *man.* He is without brutality, but he is also without that reserve of deep love and forgiving power which even the rougher men of the West have.' The explanation of this 'reserve of deep love' in the Western man can only lie in Christianity.[1]

3. The devil still pursues his course, and, alas! with no inconsiderable measure of success. It is not everyone whom he needs to take up on a mountain. Even the view from their own doorstep is enough for some, the view which offers present gratification, in the place of the promises of God yet to come, or that portion of good things which God in His goodness has thought fit to provide.

(1) 'All this power will I give thee.' He comes with this offer to the Church, the bride of Christ. Do you not see your splendid national position, with a recognized place in a great nation, which boasts of some of the highest intellects, the proudest fortunes, the most distinguished ancestry in the world? What prevents you from extending your influence? Why are not more young men attracted to the ministry? Why is it always to be 'not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called'? The Church is wasting her opportunities by living in the straitened *formulæ* of a dead past. Cut away the trammels of a mediæval creed which offends the more liberal mind of a purer Christianity. Preach philanthropy, and kindness, and the religion of love, rather than the stern doctrine of a strict retribution. Do not frighten back the rising youth by exacting dogmas and a parade of the supernatural. Preach the freedom of truth, the universal comprehension under one fatherhood of all who strive after truth, and the world is at your feet.

¶ The classical instance of the contemptuous rejection of ready-made clothing was, of course, David's refusal to wear Saul's armour. There is a world of significance in that old-world story. Saul's armour is a very fine thing—*for Saul!* But if David feels that he can do better work with a sling, then, in the name of all that is reasonable, give him a sling! If he has to fight Goliath, why hamper him with ready-made clothes? . . . In his *Frederick the Great,* Carlyle tells us how the young prince's iron-handed father employed a learned university professor to teach the boy theology. The doctor dosed his youthful pupil with creeds and catechisms until his brain whirled with meaningless tags and phrases. And in recording the story Carlyle bursts out upon the dry-as-dust professor. 'In heaven's name,' he cries, 'teach the boy nothing at all, or else teach him something that he will know, as long as he lives, to be eventually and indisputably true!'

Now what is this fine outburst of thunderous wrath but an emphatic protest against the use of ready-made clothes? A man's faith should fit him like the clothes for which he has been most carefully measured. . . . A man might as well try to wear his father's clothes as try to wear his father's faith. It will never really fit him.[1]

(2) And the same offer is put before man at different stages of his existence. 'All this power will I give thee.' What is dishonesty in many cases, but the clutching at some immediate profit

[1] T. Moscrop, *The Kingdom Without Frontiers,* 95.

[1] F. W. Boreham, *Mushrooms on the Moor,* 24.

which the slow revolving wheel of the course of God's providence seemed to withhold? The temptation is great, it is a real one in this hungry, bustling age, to snatch at the prize without considering the giver or the conditions of the gift. Beware of the first beginning, beware of the first mutterings of discontent, the first symptoms of covetousness. The money taken from the bag is the beginning of the betrayal of Christ. Can any worldly pleasure compensate for the loss of a quiet conscience? Can any position, however honourable, minister comfort if its supports are rotted through and through with dishonesty? Can any power or any influence which has been won at the cost of the loss of self-respect minister happiness?

Mark how this great keynote of the life of our Master which is struck in the second temptation, and is seen vibrating through His whole ministry, is caught up by St. Paul in that glowing sentence which contains the concentrated essence of Christianity: 'Be not overcome of evil. but overcome evil with good.' Do not use force to overcome evil, overcome it with good. That is the great Christian principle which is embodied in this temptation. Wherever that golden rule has been departed from, wherever it has been violated —however plausible the excuse, however laudable the object in view—there the mind of Christ has been departed from, and the method of the world preferred to the method of Christ. Whenever, on the plea of advancing the cause of Christ, compulsion of any sort has been employed; wherever in matters of conscience the policy of coercion instead of persuasion has been adopted; wherever and whenever the attempt has been made to recommend religion to men by any other means than the attraction of the truth and the beauty of holiness, the motive may have been right, but the means used have been wrong and false to the mind of Jesus Christ.

¶ The doctrine that the Catholic Church is the inspired guide, representing the voice of the Divinity on earth and deciding with absolute authority all questions of right and wrong, very naturally led to the conviction that nothing which was conducive to its interests could be really criminal, and in all departments of morals it regulated the degrees of praise and blame. The doctrine which is still so widely professed but now so faintly realized, that the first essential to salvation is orthodox belief, placed conduct on a lower plane of importance than dogma, while the conviction that it is in the power of man to obtain absolute certainty in religious belief, that erroneous belief is in the eyes of the Almighty a crime bringing with it eternal damnation, and that the teacher of heresy is the greatest enemy of mankind, at once justified in the eyes of the believer acts which now seem the gravest moral aberrations. Many baser motives and elements no doubt mingled with the long and hideous history of the religious persecutions of Christendom, but in the eyes of countless conscientious men this teaching seemed amply sufficient to justify them and to stifle all feeling of compassion for the victims.[1]

¶ One of the captains serving under Cortes, in the conquest of Mexico, was a man called Velasquez. A chief named Hatney, having made a desperate resistance to escape the oppression of the invaders, was condemned by Velasquez to be burned alive. When the priests urged him at the stake to become a Christian, so that his soul might gain an entrance into Heaven, he asked if the white men would go there. On being told 'Yes,' he cried out: 'Then I will not be a Christian, for I would not go again to a place where I must find men so cruel!'[2]

Sensation or Sacrifice.

Luke iv. 9.—'Cast thyself down.'

Matt. xxvii. 40.—'Come down from the cross.'

THERE is in this life a downward drag of circumstances, a gravitation pull of evil, from which none of us will ever be free until we hear at last the heavenly summons, 'Come up hither.' From the cradle to the grave He who 'smote in Man, for man, the foe,' heard those voices clamouring in His ears that He should come down. As these two verses remind us, He met that suggestion at the very outset of His career of redemption and He encountered it at the very end. He heard it on the pinnacle of the Temple, He heard it on the Cross. The greater the height to which a man has been lifted by the power of the Spirit

[1] W. E. H. Lecky, *The Map of Life*, 49.

[2] J. W. W. Moeran, *Teaching by Illustration*, 206.

or by the will of men, the stronger the temptation to fall. Neither the heights of sanctity nor the high places of pain are safe from sinful insinuations and suggestions. The world and the power of evil still offer all manner of rewards, and hold out all kinds of promises, to the man who will come down. It was just because our Lord realized that it would be indeed a come-down that He so strenuously refused to listen to the alluring voices.

1. The world loves sensations. What a stir it would have made had Jesus appeared on the well-known pinnacle of the Temple at Jerusalem while the courts below were thronged with multitudes of worshippers, had He suddenly floated down among them from the dizzy height, smiling and unhurt! Had not the prophet of old said that the Lord would come suddenly to His temple? How could prophecy be more spectacularly fulfilled? All through His ministry did the religious leaders of the Jews not keep twitting Jesus on His apparent inability to give them a striking sign that would at once prove the truth of all His claims? How easy and dramatic to settle the whole thing once and for all by a sensational advent to the Temple courts! And was there not Scripture for it? Was it not all in the highest interests and to be done with the purest motives?

Suppose our Lord had yielded to the impulse. Suppose He had cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple. Then Jesus of Nazareth would have been a nine days' wonder instead of a nineteen centuries' worship. He would have been the sensation of the world, but not its Saviour.

And we are still confronted with the temptation to make religion popular and salvation sensational; to be *outré,* and eccentric, and spectacular. Attract attention at all costs, says the voice of the tempter to-day. Play with the laws of God. Defy the laws of gravity and of gravitation. Go in for the exceptional, even if it be risky. Break new ground. Make the people stare and gape and talk. You will be in the hands of God—at any rate you will be in the mouths of men.

Back from that dizzy height as you value your soul's safety and the success of the message God has given you to bring! Let the world keep twitting the Church on its inability to hold the field against films and football, a world that still keeps asking for signs, when what it needs is salvation. Back from the airy vertiginous heights to the plain, humdrum, beaten track which the feet of the chanting pilgrims have worn hard and straight! Consent to follow the Lord and Master of us all in the quiet paths of service and surrender, and you have successfully withstood the first voice that would have cast you down never to rise again.

2. But when you have passed the first ward you will come to the second, as Christ our Lord did before us. Youth with its glamour goes. The love of the sensational passes. The circus tricks are seen through, the spangled dresses look pathetically shabby out of the limelight. We seek for ourselves a quieter religion, a more reposeful spiritual experience. The desire for climbing on to the pinnacle of things has gone with the foolhardiness of youth. But now the danger is that our spiritual life should come to an untimely end, not through a broken neck, but through fatty degeneration of the heart. And before we quite realize it we are 'lifted up' once again, only this time not on a pinnacle of glory but on a cross of suffering. For some the suffering is physical, for some it is mental; some taste both kinds of anguish.

And once again that insinuating voice is heard, 'Come down, come down.' What has religion to do with a cross of suffering? Pain, anguish, sorrow, doubt, darkness, the sense of being forsaken by God—these are the very last sensations, surely, that a Son of God should ever know. So the thought came to our Lord. Why, the whole thing's at stake! If you are really the Christ you had better come down if you expect us or anyone else ever to believe in you. If the temptation on the pinnacle of the Temple was great, what shall we say of the temptation on the pinnacle of the Cross? To take the pain out of life and the sting out of sin, would that not be a sure way to the hearts of men? But He who hung and suffered there was as though He heard them not.

Those voices were never more clamant than they are to-day. Never was there a time when

the offence of the Cross was more offensive. People will run sentimentally to-day to the manger in Bethlehem, but at Calvary they still stand 'afar off' beholding that sight. This is an age when everybody seems to be out for devices to save labour and eliminate pain, and they want a religion to match—a religion that is drenched with sentiment but absolutely dry of sacrifice. There never was an age that was so ready to be religious—on its own terms. They like Christ—'the Christ' they prefer to call Him now. But if they could only get Him to come down off that Cross! A crown of thorns is such a nasty prickly thing! A religion without suffering or sacrifice or service—how attractive it would be! How specious the invitation to come down from the Cross! How far-seeing! How worldly-wise! It has been left to our age to launch those fancy and crossless religions upon a world that is only too ready to embrace that kind of thing, the religions beloved of upholstered suburbia, but which somehow one can't see going down into the slums with William Booth, or marching through the heart of Africa with David Livingstone.

You can always tell these rose-water religions by the place they give to the Cross, or rather the place they refuse to give it. Said an adherent of one of them, on seeing a copy of Dr. Denney's book, *The Death of Christ,* on my shelves, 'But *we* don't believe the eternal Christ died.' A nasty rebuff for Paul of Tarsus! 'Come down from that Cross, and you can do anything you want with this generation, Thou Jesus of Nazareth,' they cry. 'Abolish pain and suffering, and we will believe in you.'

What a ghastly travesty of truth! You are still offering the hungry soul a stone instead of bread, even if the stone you offer be a diamond. What has a pale, gossamer fantasy of make-believe to give a suffering and sinful world? 'We preach Christ crucified,' and unless we are going to do that we had better go and tout for some harmless patent medicine. We preach One who said, not 'There is no such thing as pain,' but 'the cup *that my Father hath given me,* shall I not drink it?' And He is present to-day with all sufferers everywhere, and with all who are not denying suffering but defying it. We preach a Saviour who did not pretend that life could be lived without pain and sorrow, but One who won through to the love behind the loss. We are joined in a believing fellowship, not with men who said, 'It was good for me that I managed to dodge the blow,' but who without one shred of affectation declared, 'It was good for me that I was afflicted.' And there are hundreds who will tell you that they have proved the truth of the assertion that 'when God gives to us the clearest sight, He does not touch our eyes with love, but sorrow.' 'If Thou be the Christ,' they say, 'stay on the Cross.' [1]

¶ Someone says that it is 'not pain undergone but pain accepted' that bears fruit an hundredfold. You know the acceptance has not been easy—you know sometimes the flints have cut my feet deep enough, but thank God for two things—I never for any single moment lost the absolute certainty of infinite Love and Wisdom 'brooding over the face of the waters'—the certainty of my Father's arms around me—and secondly that no suffering or pain could shake the love that has never been half so strong, so real, so ideal, so unselfish as now. I doubt if I ever half knew what being a friend was before—I think I have earned the knowledge now—some of it.[2]

We paint our life—a dream of pastoral air,
Meadows of Eden, skies of faultless blue:
The Master comes, and, to our hurt despair,
Masses the shades, doth deepen, merge, subdue:
But when the picture hangs, we shall declare
It was those darkening touches here and there,
Whence all the beauty grew.[3]

The Third Temptation.

Luke iv. 9-11.—'And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the son of God, cast thyself down from hence; for it is written: He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.'

THIS is the highest and most subtle temptation of all. The more spiritually minded a man is the more will he be exposed to it. His inner life, his essential life, is hid with God; in communion

[1] H. L. Simpson, *The Intention of His Soul*, 124.
[2] M. Todd, *Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, 114.
[3] F. Langbridge, *Little Tapers*, 32.

with Him he lives, and moves, and has his being. What more easy and natural than to presume on this, and to ignore the claims of that passing world of sense with which he finds himself connected; to depend upon God to override the incidence of its laws by interposition of His omnipotent power? 'God is your Father, you have made yourself one with Him by free submission to His will. In the strength of that union you can afford to ignore the lower laws of mere physical existence. You can depend upon Him to override them on your behalf, to suspend the law of gravity, for instance, if its action threatens your destruction. Why not show your trust in Him, and prove His protecting power, by defying this law? Why not cast yourself down from this pinnacle? He will give His angels charge over you, so that you hurt not your foot against a stone.' So the Tempter spoke. His words were in the form of a religious appeal, a direct challenge to faith and consciousness of inner union with God. But our Lord's reply is quite clear and quite conclusive. 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' He is Lord of the natural as well as of the spiritual world, and He demands that we should render obedience to the laws of both alike. It is not for us to tempt Him, to challenge Him to perform a miracle at our instigation. It is our duty to render allegiance to Him by conforming to the conditions of bodily as well as of spiritual life. Doubtless the spiritual claim must override the material when they come into collision with each other; but it is not for us to force them into collision.

This temptation has repeated itself at every period of the Church's history. It has presented itself to many lofty souls striving for spiritual perfection, and not seldom have they succumbed to it.

1. The widespread development of monasticism in the Middle Ages was, to a large extent, due to influences of this kind. They were times of rapine and lawlessness and crude elemental brute passion; times when it was often well nigh impossible for a man living the ordinary life to avoid the contamination of the grossest forms of sin. So the action of spiritually-minded men, in secluding themselves from their fellow-men, and thus evading the ordinary duties and responsibilities of secular life, was often legitimate and sometimes necessary. Monasticism arose to meet a definite need, and it performed an important function in the development of the Church's life. It is hardly too much to say that, humanly speaking, Christianity could hardly have survived through those dark ages, when our modern civilization was passing through its birth throes, had it not been for the strong and concentrated centres of religious influence which the monasteries provided. But the mistake of monasticism was that it exalted into a counsel of perfection exceptional action made necessary by the exigencies of the times. It is one thing to live apart from our fellow-men because we know that only thus can we maintain our religious integrity; it is quite another thing to claim that by doing so we have ascended to a higher level of life than the man who remains in the outer world and fights for God's cause there. That claim is altogether illegitimate.

For the Christian the highest type of life must always be the kind of life which Christ Himself lived. The life of the man who mixes freely with his fellow-men; who joys with their joys, and sorrows with their sorrows, who evades no social responsibility; who discharges his duty to the State even though the State is as tyrannical and unjust in its dealings as the old Roman Empire often was; who is on terms of friendliness with even the worldly and depraved, with the Pharisees and Sadducees, with the publicans and sinners, establishing such links of human kindliness and sympathy with them as will enable him to pass on to them something of the higher life of which he is a leaven centre. That is the true Christian ideal of life. No ideal of mere other-worldliness, of secluded pietism, of isolated spirituality. The Christian, if he is to be a true follower of His Lord, must see to it that he renders to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, to God the things that are God's; that his service of the one does not lead him to deprive the other of his due. He is to cultivate his devotional life, indeed, to be earnest in prayer, to be careful and regular in his communions, to see to it that he has quiet times for going apart with Christ in meditation. But he must also see to it that he is a good citizen, an energetic business man, a wise father, a kind and judicious friend. That he conforms to all the legitimate requirements of the outer world

of man and Nature, and meets those requirements to the best of his ability.

Thou dwellest not, O Lord, apart
Within some temple cold and bare;
Wherever glows a generous heart,
Thy kingdom and Thy court are there.

Why, then, should I elect to live
Shadowed by some monastic wall,
And to the empty silence give
The service that I owe to all?

Rather I choose the heat of life,
With all its snares and fears, to face,
Where men are marching to the fife
About the world's great market-place.[1]

2. In the long protracted quarrel between theology and science we can find the same spirit at work. That quarrel, so far as it has been the fault of theologians, has been largely due to a disposition on their part to disregard the fact that the laws of Nature are as truly God's laws as those of spiritual existence, and that it is therefore as much a religious duty to investigate and understand them by their own appropriate methods as it is to gain a true view of the laws of conscience, or of inspiration, or of ecclesiastical order. We are inclined nowadays to regard the Cardinals who tried Galileo, and forced him to recant his statement that the sun goes round the earth, as a set of very arrogant and foolish old gentlemen. But there is no reason to suppose that they were not perfectly sincere, or that they were more arrogant or foolish than the great mass of people of their time. Their mistake was due to the fact that, in common with most Christians of the time, they regarded spiritual laws as the only real laws, and ignored the claim of natural laws to independent consideration and respect. The same principle applies to the opposition aroused by some of the theories of modern physical science—by the theory of evolution, for instance. Religious people were roused to fury by its apparent denial of the Biblical account of man's creation, and denounced its advocates in unmeasured terms. But the Bible is not a scientific manual. It is a religious book, supreme in its own province, but carrying no special authority outside that province. So far as it deals with historical facts or scientific theories its statements must be tested by the methods of scientific or historical investigation, and must be rejected when they can be shown to be incapable of standing that test. To insist on this is not to assume an anti-religious or unreligious attitude. On the contrary, it is to rise to a higher religious point of view—to the point of view from which we recognize that all things, physical as well as spiritual, come from God: that He is the supreme Ruler of the universe, and that He rules each separate province of His dominion by special and appropriate laws, which it is our duty to understand and to obey.

3. The quarrel between theology and physical science is almost a thing of the past. Rumbling reminiscences of it can still be heard in obscure corners, but the best theologians and the best scientists have practically agreed to delimit their territories and to exchange their former attitude of hostility for one of friendliness, and often of cordial co-operation. The same statement, however, does not hold good of the relations between theology and historical science. The conflict here is in some quarters still acute. The official Roman Church, for instance, has recently been engaged in a vigorous campaign against what is called the Modernist movement, has used every means at her disposal to suppress that movement by silencing its exponents, or driving them outside her fold. But the claim embodied in the Modernist movement is fundamentally and essentially true. It is the claim that God gave us our intellectual eyes, and that He intends us to use them on their appropriate objects, and according to their appropriate laws. That intellectual honesty is as much a moral duty as any other duty in the Decalogue. That we have no right in the name of religion to suppress facts, or to pretend to believe, or to coerce or to cajole others into believing, statements or theories which we know in our hearts to be untrue, and which, if it were not for their supposed religious importance, we should reject at once as untenable or absurd. It is this principle which the Modernist movement stands for, and the well-meaning Obscurantists who have tried to suppress that movement by high-handed methods of ecclesiastical discipline are making just the same attempt which the Cardinals made

[1] G. Thomas, *The Wayside Altar*, 15.

in their encounter with Galileo. The time has gone by when any ecclesiastical authority, or any other authority, can prevent men using, in the investigation of truth, the intellectual faculties with which God has endowed them. It is right, indeed, that they should be warned that they are responsible for the careful and discriminating use of these faculties. It is right that they should be reminded that a rationalism which ignores the facts of spiritual experience, and frames its theories independently of them, is as untrue and as misleading as the most extravagant superstition can be. But no Church which professes to speak with the authority of the God of truth can fail to belie its own profession, and to undermine the foundations of its own influence, if it shrinks from the free search for truth, and demands acceptance of tenets which will not satisfy the tests of truth.

The truth to which this third temptation calls our attention is the truth that God is supreme in every department of His universe. The laws by which that universe is governed, its physical as well as its spiritual laws, emanate from Him, and come to us invested with His authority. It is for us to recognize that authority and to defer to it; to conform our bodily and intellectual life to physical and scientific laws; to conform our soul life to spiritual laws. In the mind of God no contradiction exists between these. They are to Him complementary elements in one harmonious whole. In our experience, doubtless, such contradiction seems to arise from time to time. It is not always easy to reconcile the traditional beliefs of the Church, or rather the way in which we have been accustomed to state them, with the facts which critical investigation and historical research are bringing to light. But this constitutes no reason for abandoning those beliefs, or even for feeling insecure with regard to them. They rest on foundations which the waves of surface criticism cannot shake. We may be assured that the contradiction is apparent not real, transitory not permanent, due to the narrowness of our outlook, not to the actual circumstances of the case. It is our duty to widen our outlook, and to get rid of prejudice and antiquated modes of expression. These apparent contradictions, properly treated, should have the effect of strengthening and broadening our faith, not of weakening or narrowing it. They are God's means of forcing us to be true and honest and progressive. The faith which emerges from their ordeal is ten thousand times more worth having than one which can be retained only by closing our eyes to facts, and shutting our ears to voices which seem to disturb our fancied security.

¶ How unnecessary and how suicidal is that timidity, not to use a stronger term, with which many religious persons, and, I regret to add, some divines among us, receive the successive disclosures of the constitution of natural things, which of late years have come upon us in thick abundance. Such timidity is *unnecessary*, because each new fact, each new truth, when fairly presented to the mind, if only it be a truth, cannot fail to become a new illustration of Him whom they know to be The Truth, and whom they profess to love. For my own part, and I hope I say it with no affectation, and I am sure I say it with no reserve, from the results of modern research I have gathered additional reasons for resting in the simplicity of the ancient Christian faith, and in modern discoveries I have found many a new and unexpected trace of the Creator's majesty, of His power, His wisdom, and His love.[1]

The Use of Temptation.

Luke iv. 14.—'Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee.'

THE Gospel of Mark connects the Temptation of our Lord definitely with His Baptism. Mark gives us no details of the Temptation such as we find in Matthew and Luke; he simply says, 'The Spirit driveth him forth into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan' —the brevity of the narrative lending emphasis to the words, 'and straightway,' with which it begins. The Temptation followed directly on the Baptism. The Spirit who descended on Jesus at His Baptism drove Him into the wilderness; it was to the consciousness of Divine Sonship proclaimed in the Baptism that the Tempter made appeal. Luke, with equal precision, connects Christ's Temptation with the beginning of His public work. He goes at once from the Temptation to the Galilean ministry, and sums up in two verses the early ministry itself. 'Jesus returned in the power of the spirit into Galilee: and a

[1] *Memoirs of Professor Pritchard*, 208.

fame went out concerning him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.' We learn from Mark that religious elevation is no security against the suggestions of evil; that there is a spiritual as well as a worldly wickedness; that there are forms of trial which are possible only to high purpose awakened and sustained by communion with God. We learn from Luke that temptation is not only a probation, it is also a discipline of the soul; that in resistance of evil is largely given to us fitness for Divine ministry.

1. Temptation is *a preparation for life.*—All thoughtful men form some sort of plan of what their lives will be; and, if they meditate on it, they cannot but foresee perils here and wanderings there, trials to which they will be exposed, possibilities of disastrous failure. One man would be a Christian thinker, a teacher of others, an expositor of truth. There are temptations in the very conception of such a calling—vanity, dogmatism, self-sufficiency are spectres of the study; and other temptations soon beset the student's way—intellectual pride, undevoutness, doubt. Another man has a faculty for affairs; he is conscious he can deal with men; with the consciousness comes the feeling that he can outwit them, or use them as his instruments, or play upon their passions; and, as he anticipates prosperity, his heart may be already swelling with pride, or hardening into avarice, or declining upon lust. A third has social graces and the sympathies which go along with these, and he, too, is confronted with perils; he can be shallow and yet admired; he can be dishonest and live on others' love; there may be for him a subtle pleasure in trifling with a human heart.

(1) It is a sad hour when such thoughts as these are presented to us for the first time, when such things are first seen as what we might come to desire, or even choose and do. But it is the inevitable discipline through which we pass. And the issue may be not sad, but glorious. There are two powers with souls in such a conflict—God, for His great purpose, granting the solemn insight into life; the Evil One seeking to baffle God's purpose by confusing the judgment and awakening base desire. We are meeting here the very temptations we shall encounter when we fulfil our calling; and we must conquer them in purpose if we would be safe in life. Let us be watchful, prayerful, resolved, and we shall come from our solitary struggle with larger wisdom and the composure of strength. Such an experience is not only a time of probation, but also, and even more, a time of discipline. To the devout and obedient and self-denying is given the ability to see the temptation and to overcome it. They learn the secret of security in staying the soul on God; and every victory won in purpose and resolve will prove an encouragement to endurance, will make resistance more easy.

¶ Every evil to which we do not succumb is a benefactor. As the Sandwich Islander believes that the strength and valour of the enemy he kills passes into himself, so we gain the strength of the temptation we resist.[1]

(2) Moreover, every temptation resisted in our direct experience of the world is the preparation for a larger, nobler living. The Divine forces by which we are begirt and inspired are realized only in actual conflict. We have one kind of faith when, in the study, we mark how the gospel commends itself to the judgment, elevates the imagination, enlarges and purifies our hopes; another, a far stronger and more assured faith, when we use it to sustain obedience. The prompt response of faith is another result of the experience of temptation. We have faith, as we have knowledge, as we have wit, as we have words, which seem to lurk in obscure corners of the mind and are not forthcoming when they are required. Aptitude comes not from solitary self-preparation, but from association with men. It is exactly here that many a man fears that he will fail to acquit himself well in spiritual conflict. The world, the flesh, and the devil may take him at unawares. 'The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.' O could he be always ready! Constant readiness is one of the choicest fruits of actual victory; we pass from struggle to struggle, and our fear dies away. We rise to a large confidence in the Spirit of God, who helps our infirmity. It is not we who speak, but the Spirit of our Father who speaketh in us.

(3) Then, too, there is that general elevation of character which comes from consciousness of

[1] Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Divine guardianship; the composure of one who knows what victory is, who is not afraid of struggle, because he has overcome. What a suggestion of elevation is in the words in which Luke describes our Lord—'Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee; and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.' How serene a majesty must have sat upon Him when 'the eyes of all that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.' How deep and full the springs of feeling in Him when 'all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.' Let us not be afraid of trial, or mourn the inevitable disclosures which are before us of the mystery of evil, the varied assaults of the tempter. Men come out of conflict radiant with the beauties of holiness, the light of morning on their brow. God's gifts of faith, of spiritual aptitude, of elevation of character are 'to him that overcometh.'

O well for him whose will is strong!
He suffers, but he will not suffer long;
He suffers, but he cannot suffer wrong:
For him nor moves the loud world's random mock,
Nor all Calamity's hugest waves confound,
Who seems a promontory of rock,
That, compass'd round with turbulent sound,
In middle ocean meets the surging shock,
Tempest-buffeted, citadel-crown'd.[1]

2. Temptation is *a preparation for ministry*.—The Spirit that leads us into the wilderness, and aids us in temptation, will bring us back to our place among men, and prompt us to service for them; then the Divine purpose in our temptation will be seen. The one great reason of the perplexity of so many pious Israelites when they saw the righteous troubled was that they had not fully grasped the fact that the righteous suffer for the wicked; the godly are tempted—they are tried whose faith can bear the trial—in order that they may be fitted to save the ungodly. We need not wonder that the whole subject of temptation is beset with obscurity in the minds of so many Christians. They are asking what it has done for their individual advancement, instead of marking the powers of varied service with which it has furnished them. We might be made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, no doubt, with far less acquaintance with the powers of evil, far less of struggle and of conflict, than we experience. But what of those who are taught out of our wisdom, who lean upon us, and ask for our prayers? Others see in us sometimes what we do not suspect in ourselves. They bless God that we have been in those straits of temptation, the meaning of which still remains a riddle to us. Whence come tenderness, reach of sympathy, calmness in presence of evil, elevation of temper, certainty of faith? They are fruits of the Spirit, who leads us into the wilderness, and brings us again among men; they were given us by God in that hour when, for His sake, we resisted the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and put aside the vision of the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them. There are devils which will not quit our brother's soul save by our prayer and fasting, and, thank God, He makes us—even at the cost of personal anguish and struggle—He makes us pray and fast. The Cross is at the heart of things; the law of sacrifice is the law of human life. 'Are' we 'not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?'

¶ Where is one to get wherewith to help another if not from the healed scars in himself? O brother, that small temptation thou thinkest not worth contending against, for the victory will only benefit thy selfish self, and defeat will make no difference to anybody, know therein lies thy only chance ever to help others. Conquer thy temptation; it is a phial of healing for thy younger brother and for friends thou hast never seen.[1]

Temptation a preparation for life, temptation a preparation for ministry—when shall we learn that life and ministry are one? To how many a mystery have we here the key? All things fall into their proper place as we understand that God disciplines us that He may use us; trains us to spiritual insight, tempers us to courage, gives us assurance of heavenly succour, and reveals His own presence in us, that our influence may be large and true. We have heard of the faith and patience of the saints—how 'the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends'; how the Saviour said to Peter, 'Simon, Simon,

[1] Tennyson.

[1] R. W. Barbour, *Thoughts*, 80.

behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.' We have psalms that have risen 'out of the depths'; hymns of confession, pleading, victory, that are welcome to us as 'songs in the night.' 'We have an high priest that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.' Shall we think it strange if some 'fiery trial' try us? Shall we rebel against the discipline by which we, too, are to be made kings and priests unto God?

See the silent smithy where,
On the noiseless anvils laid,
Day by day and year by year
Souls of men are forged and made.

Ceaselessly the hammers fall,
Making ties and rivets fast,
Till the perfect ship is found
Ready for the seas at last.

Trial and temptation strong
Beat upon the hardening steel,
Love and trust and self-control
Rivet it from truck to keel.[1]

The Power of the Spirit.

Luke iv. 14.—'In the power of the Spirit.'

THE Holy Spirit entered upon His reign of sovereignty in this world when Jesus passed through the veil. His coming in His full power—a power transcending altogether the power He had possessed in the world before—was caused by, and was altogether dependent upon, the victory of Jesus of Nazareth in the flesh. The chief characteristic of the disciples of the Lord in *pre-Pentecostal* days was *powerlessness*. Everywhere in the gospel narrative we discern their failure to really follow Jesus, and to live such lives as would identify them with Him in the eyes of the beholding world. They were devoted to Him, but they were continually defeated by the enemy, and their lives during that time stand out as a startling disappointment. To them, however, in the days preceding His crucifixion and in those succeeding His resurrection, the Lord constantly emphasized the promise of an adequate power to enable them to be in truth His witnesses—which promise was fulfilled in the Person of the Holy Spirit, who descended upon them in the upper room on the day of Pentecost. Subsequently the distinguishing feature of those *post-Pentecostal* days was *powerlessness replaced by Divine power*. Now there is probably no consciousness so keen among the people of God to-day as that of the need of power. In our own lives and in the sphere of our Christian service we bewail our lack of enduement, but often fail to realize that this promise is given unto us—'Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you' (Acts i. 8)—and that therefore a powerless Christian life is at once needless and sinful. In fact, a Christian who lacks power to live and serve is a contradiction of the entire promise and purpose of God. Someone has defined 'responsibility' as being 'our response to God's ability'; and surely it is so, for upon our response to this all-comprehensive promise of power depends the fulfilment of our large responsibility to the world which awaits our witness to the reality of Christ.

1. But there is a widespread misconception current as to the nature of the power of the Spirit, and many are earnestly looking for something they may probably never receive. We have for so long exclusively identified the Spirit's enduement with power to preach, to move crowds to repentance, and to do big things for God and men, that we are in danger of overlooking its true character. All Christians are not called to be preachers or leaders, but all *are* called to do the will of God. Hence the promised power of the Spirit may be defined in general terms as the power to accomplish in us and through us the purpose of God. Thus its operation is bounded by the will of God, and the character of its manifestation in any life is determined by that will. To one it is the power for effective utterance, to another the strength for unselfish intercession, to another the enduement for patient suffering; but to all the power to glorify God before men in just that sphere of life and labour to which He unerringly appoints them. Not a few who have received the promise of the Spirit by faith have nevertheless been keenly disappointed at not experiencing a sudden acquisition of power to do the work which God has assigned not to them but

[1] William Hodgson.

to others; and as a safeguard against this, none of us must forget for a moment that every manifestation of the Spirit's power is entirely contingent upon His government. He sets the members in the body 'as it hath pleased him,' and then imparts to each member the power to fulfil his own individual function—but only that.

¶ The Church of Scotland receives many recruits from the Highlands. Not all of these are suited to the sacred calling which they have chosen, and Edward Caird had once a student of this description to deal with. The man in question was absolutely hopeless from an intellectual point of view. For a long time the Professor did his best to instil the principles of moral philosophy into the youth's mind; but it became obvious that the would-be minister's intelligence was of the most rudimentary nature, and that he was simply incapable of grasping the subject. Being satisfied as to this, the Professor requested the student to meet him in his private room, when the following colloquy took place: 'Now, Mr. ——, I have asked you to meet me as I am inclined to think that you are really wasting your time in my class. The subject does not seem to appeal to you, and I think that your time could be more profitably employed elsewhere. May I ask what you intend to be?' 'I am going in for the Church sir,' was the answer. 'Oh!' said the Professor. 'And may I inquire what led you to adopt the Church as a profession?' 'Well sir,' answered the student, 'it was a desire to do something to the glory of God.' 'What is your father's business?' asked the Professor. 'He makes brooms.' 'Well, Mr.——,' was the Professor's reply, 'while I do not wish to be unduly discouraging, I honestly think that it would be much more to the glory of God if you went home and made brooms with your father.'[1]

2. Further, the power of the Spirit must not be confused in our minds with the consciousness or realization of that power. To very many the Spirit's power is co-existent with an unvarying sense of utter weakness and emptiness. Not a few among those who have sounded the depths of God's faithfulness to fulfil His promises are continually constrained to say, 'When I am weak, then am I strong,' and to glory in their infirmities while the power of Christ rests upon them.

On the other hand, there is an equal danger of presuming that 'what has been will be,' and of trusting to past experience, without definitely claiming a fresh manifestation of the Spirit's power severally before every act of service, however seemingly trivial, as well as generally for each day's walk and work and witness. It is our Lord's gracious way to give grace for expended grace, and presumption in not seeking a constant renewal inevitably leads to impoverishment, and not infrequently to defeat, with its consequent dishonour to the Lord's Name.

3. Again, the power of the Spirit is bestowed upon us only that Christ may be magnified and exalted in and by us. The truest evidence of His power will be self-effacement, and the recognition that 'the excellency of the power is of God and not of us.' Self-glory and self-aggrandizement cannot be sought simultaneously with the glory of our Lord, and he who seeks to live under the anointing power of the Spirit must be willing to be 'rendered invisible by the investiture.' Such an one in every hour of Spirit-given triumph will whisper in the listening ear of his Lord, 'Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory!'

¶ Thomas à Kempis belonged to an order whose characteristic was self-effacement—the elimination of self in work. To him the universal was everything and the individual as nothing in its presence. These two mottoes express his spirit and aim: 'Love to be unknown and to be little esteemed.' 'If you wish to be divine, remain hidden as God.'[1]

¶ A sceptic was asked by a friend to go and hear a gospel preacher. The next day the two met, and the Christian said, 'Well, what did you think of the preacher?' 'I did not think anything of him,' was the reply.

Then, noticing the disappointment on the other's face, he said, 'I could think nothing of him. I could only think of the Christ he was lifting up before our eyes—the Christ who is now my Saviour.'

[1] D. MacLeod Malloch, *The Book of Glasgow Anecdote*, 257.

[1] D. Butler, *Thomas à Kempis*, 30.

Christ's Habits.

Luke iv. 16.—'As his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day.'

Mark i. 35.—'He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.'

THESE two texts set before us our Saviour's habit in regard to public and private spiritual exercise; and they suggest to us the question, What have we, on our part, to say of these two elements in our own life? The texts, let us remember, represent not something casual or intermittent in the life of our Lord. They stand as the record of a typical essential practice. All men recognize in the life of Jesus the one unique example in human history of a life which is morally perfect and immaculate. Were we to take out of it the customary share in all common worship and the private separate communing with God, it would be an altogether different life—different in its attitude towards the common life of ordinary men, and different in its own quality and influence. Let us glance for a moment at each of these texts separately.

1. As regards the one taken from Mark—'He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed'—we have only to turn over the pages of this Gospel and note, as we go, the similar allusions, to feel that we have here what is an incidental glimpse into the practice of Christ's secret and separate life. In this passage we read that He departed into a solitary place, and prayed; in another that He departed into a mountain to pray; again that He spent the whole night in prayer. And we see this not in some crisis of His life, but as a part of that which corresponds to the common daily round in your life or mine. The inference to be drawn, the lesson to be learnt, from it is sufficiently obvious. This secret, separate, devotional exercise of the soul was His habitual spiritual food. It was thus that He recruited His moral and spiritual forces, those forces of the spiritual life which constitute at once the beauty, the attraction, the power of His character, and His Divine and awe-inspiring separateness.

And as we read and consider, the thought must surely be pressed upon us that if He needed these exercises, these secret and silent hours, what shall we say of our own lives? And what do we expect to make of our moral and spiritual character unless we too are careful to cherish under all circumstances some such recurring moments in our round of life and occupation, at which we retire into the sanctuary of separate communion with God the Father? You may take it as a moral certainty, proved by all experience, that unless you hold to a fixed habit of thus bringing your life into the secret and separate presence of God in private thought and prayer, you incur the risk of sinking to any levels that happen to be ordinary levels, of drifting with any currents that happen to prevail.

¶ Jesus took care to make His virtues habitual. 'As his custom was, he went into the synagogue.' He knew that, unless the minor graces became mechanical, the major graces must become impossible. I have often thought that, in His earlier days—the days of His boyhood, the days of His youth, the days of His labour at the bench—Jesus must have schooled Himself to do a thousand little thoughtful and unselfish kindnesses, or He could never have brought Himself, in the crisis of His life and the vigour of His manhood, to die for us men on the bitter and shameful cross.[1]

2. If we turn now from this to the other text—that which refers to His customary attendance on public prayer and at the common meeting—'He went, as his custom was, into the synagogue'—the questions suggested are very pertinent and practical. Just consider the circumstances under which, as we are told here, 'He went, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the Sabbath day.' The earlier part of the same chapter tells us of His fasting and temptation in the wilderness, of the commencement of His public mission, and His return to Nazareth. And, on His return, this is what we are told of Him—'He went, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the sabbath day.'

Thus we see Him, fresh from the great crisis of His early manhood; the long, protracted struggle of His soul in the lonely wilderness, the subtle voices of manifold temptation, the hardly won victory and the ministering angels—all this we must suppose to be still flashing across

[1] F. W. Boreham, *The Home of the Echoes*, 96.

His vision, as the scenes of any such crisis must always continue to flash through the quivering and responsive organism of the soul. If ever any man might have claimed to need no longer the customary worship of common men, it was surely Jesus, as we see Him here on this occasion, with the breath of His own heart-searching worship still upon Him, and the light of new revelation burning in His thoughts.

We all recognize His moral and spiritual superiority. Whether His spirit has taken possession of our spirit or not, He stands out as our undisputed guide to the practice of a good life. In vision, in insight, in purity, in stainlessness, in all that we reverence in human life and that good men strive to attain, we have no model to set beside His example. All the more, then, this fact deserves our notice, and calls us to follow Him, that we find Him, as His custom was, in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. He was there Sabbath after Sabbath listening to the provincial teacher, worshipping with the village labourer, praying with the ignorant and the foolish, there as a matter of custom and for His soul's benefit.

What have we to say as we picture Him with all the great thoughts of His new work swelling up in His soul, the Divinely appointed teacher of new wisdom and new faith, the bringer of new light among men, the voice of a new world, and yet, at the same time, and as a means for working out His mission more completely, a regular and devout worshipper in a village house of prayer?

If it should ever happen to any of us that we come to fancy we do not need such common prayer, or that because of defects in public worship we do not profit by it, does not this example of the Saviour rise up and rebuke us? Yes, we may rest assured, if that day ever comes to us, that we are in danger of drifting away from the great saving tides of the human spirit into some shallower artificial stream of our own time and generation. But, on the other hand, it is a happy thing for our life if, growing up in the habitual use of time-honoured spiritual exercises, we have truly learnt to know by our own experience, as by the example of the Saviour set before us in the Gospel, that they are the support and safeguard of all that is highest and purest and best in us, if only we are careful to use them with sincerity and reverence.

¶ The neglect of common worship is a mistake. The emotions which at present sleep are at any rate more likely to awaken in the company of those who have found some expression for such emotions, and by awakening to remind their possessors of powers and joys they themselves have forgotten. Common worship makes us all more conscious of our own spiritual nature and brings home to us the fact that such nature is a common possession. . . . I would ask you by joining in the prayers of your fellows to stir into more lively activity your own powers of feeding on that which is best, and to kindle a more vivid sympathy with the same powers which in others are hid under a weight of ignorance or neglect. . . Difference of opinion should not, I hold, cut any off from the great advantage which is given by the power to join in common prayer, by the sense of association in the search after the best. I suggest the use of common worship as a means of reaching a more spiritual life.[1]

¶ The great Guthrie, preaching one of his very last sermons (my brother heard him), declared that one note of a truly-good man is, that going out of church after the longest sermon, he always went, saying (I fancy within himself) *More! More!* I fear I have known truly-good folk who went out saying *Less! Less!* And possibly the most eminent persons one has preached to went out with the strong desire, unexpressed, *None at all! None at all!*[2]

The Variety of the Gospel.

Luke iv. 18.—'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.'

THE Evangelist, in placing this picture of our Lord at the opening of His preaching life, as good as says to us that if we study this preliminary passage well we shall have in it the best possible preface to the whole pulpit-life of our Lord. And a very vivid and life-like picture it is that Luke here gives us. For, as we read this chapter, we are taken back into the synagogue of Nazareth that Sabbath morning, till we see, as it were with

[1] *Canon Barnett*, ii. 150.

[2] A. K. H. Boyd, *Twenty-Five Years of St. Andrews*, ii. 27.

our own eyes, all that goes on in that synagogue. We see Jesus standing up to read. We see the book of the prophet Isaiah delivered to Him. And when He had found the place we hear Him reading the text that we know so well ever since He read it that Sabbath morning.

1. Let us turn to Isaiah and his prophecy. Looking forward to the captivity which was coming upon the Jews for their manifold sins against God, he looked yet further across all their miseries to the deliverance which should be given to them at last. Their forlorn state as prisoners in a foreign land seemed to pass before his eyes: he saw them downcast, helpless, enslaved, shut up in dark dungeons. All these sights were dreadful to one who loved his people so warmly and could not bear to think of their sufferings. Yet he knew in his inmost heart that all these things *must* come upon them, so deeply were they sunk in sin. Dreadful as God's judgments on their sins might be, their sins themselves were much more dreadful and more hopeless. Dreadful as it was that foreign armies should tear them away from their homes and the city where their fathers and grandfathers had lived, it was far more dreadful that they should tear *themselves* away from the presence of their gracious and loving God, and prefer their own devices and lusts to His will.

But God did not suffer Isaiah to be overwhelmed with that dark vision of sin and the punishment of sin. He taught him that those sharp judgments were sent in mercy to root out the sins which made them needful, and that at last they would do their appointed work, and the people would repent. In the words which go before the text in Isaiah's prophecy (lx. 21), this is the Lord's promise, 'Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.' From that root of righteousness should spring the fruit of glory and happiness. 'A little one,' the prophecy goes on, 'A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in its time.'

Such was the lesson which Isaiah had to learn and learn over again, before he could truly know in himself, or truly make known to others, the work which God had appointed for him as a preacher to the people around him. It was needful that he should, on the one hand, feel most keenly all the evils dwelling within and pressing upon him and his brethren, and, on the other hand, that he should know how far God's love and mercy go beyond man's sin and misery. So long as he had any doubt or misgiving about God's character, his own words could not fail to be perverse or even altogether false. But, now that he had learned that God was indeed Israel's Redeemer, who must and would at last bring them back to Himself, he could boldly go forth in the strength of that faith as God's messenger. And this was the message which he delivered: 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.'

Words like these could not lose their power when the man who uttered them was dead and gone. Isaiah might die, and many another prophet anointed by the Lord like him, and like him filled with the Spirit of the Lord God; but the good tidings to the meek, the liberty to the captives, could not die, for these came from the ever-flowing love of the undying God. Every new age could not but receive some fresh gift of the joy and freedom which He was for ever preparing for His people. When, therefore, Isaiah's words were written in a book and handed down from father to son, they must have brought comfort and strength to many a weary soul in troubles yet worse than those which afflicted Jerusalem in the reign of Hezekiah. The seven hundred years which passed before Christ came were full of events that must have given such words much precious meaning to all who had hearts to receive it. And so, we cannot doubt, it was on that memorable day of which we read in Luke. In that village of Nazareth, up in the Galilean hills, it is

hard, in spite of what follows, to think that there were none to whom the words were not only familiar, but dear.

All this must be borne in mind, if we would understand our Lord's act. The story occurs in Luke, immediately after the Temptation; but, if we compare it with the shorter accounts of what is obviously the same event in Matthew (xiii. 54-58) and Mark (vi. 1-6), we shall see that Christ must have preached and worked miracles in Capernaum and the neighbourhood of the sea of Galilee before He thus went up to His old home at Nazareth. Still, the visit to Nazareth must have occurred early in His ministry, and we are warranted in taking His language in that synagogue as one of the most marked declarations of the purpose of His whole teaching.

2. The peculiar feature of this quotation from Isaiah, which Christ makes His own, is its doubleness. 'The poor'—but men are poor in condition and in spirit. 'The captives'—but men may be in bondage under masters or circumstances, and also under their own sin. 'The blind'—but men may be blind of eye and blind also in spiritual vision. 'The bruised'—but men are bruised in the struggles of this rough world, and also by the havoc of their own evil passions. Which did Christ mean? Both, but chiefly the moral, for He always struck through the external forms of evil to the moral root from which it springs, and of whose condition it is the general exponent. And He always passed on to the spiritual end to which external betterment points. He was no reformer, playing about the outward forms of evil —hunger, poverty, disease, oppression—giving ease and relief for the moment. He does indeed deal with these, but He puts under His work a moral foundation, and crowns it with a spiritual consummation. Dealing with these, He was all the while inserting the spiritual principle which He calls *faith*. Unless He can do this, He is nearly indifferent whether He works or not. If you cannot heal a man's spirit, it is a small thing to heal his body. If you cannot make a man rich in heart and thought, it is a slight matter to relieve his poverty. At the same time Christ will not separate the two, for they are the two sides of one evil thing. Poverty and disease and misery mostly spring out of moral evil. They are not the limitations of the finite nature, but are the fangs of the serpent of sin. Human ills are not the sole products of ignorance, or the chance features of human progress, but the fruit of selfishness—not an order but a perversion. And so Christ sets Himself as the deliverer from each—the origin and the result, the sin at the root and the misery which is its fruitage. Therefore let no man think that there is any gospel of deliverance or helpfulness for him, except as it is grounded in a cure of whatever evil there may be in him—evil habits, or selfish aims, or a worldly spirit.

¶ All our mighty achievements are being hampered and often neutralised; . . . all our social diseases are being aggravated by this supreme and dominant fact—that we have suffered our religion to slide from us. . . . The urgent task of our time is to recover a religious faith as a basis of life, both personal and social.[1]

3. But the thing that strikes us most forcibly as we read this text, which Jesus took from Isaiah as the best expression of His own purpose, is its comprehensiveness. The work of the religious teacher, as Jesus understood it, is characterized by its richness and variety. Rightly apprehended, it is by far the noblest task to which an inspired and inspiring mind can commit itself. No other function is quite so exalted, or so helpful and beneficent in its influence, as that of the prophet. It claims the world for its field, and every gift for its instrument, and every circumstance for its opportunity. The moral seer is never without a vision, and has not to wait for a calling. His silence is his chief condemnation, and his inactivity is his deepest reproach. The Spirit of the Lord is upon him, and the ever-present impulse to speak and to act in the way that best serves his exalted purpose never leaves him. He is perplexed as other men are; he is subject to the common lot, and is not spared any experience which befalls other men; but an inspired sanity steadies his judgment, and a rare sympathy with the people he seeks to help enables him to render faithful service to his generation. His entire work, as Jesus depicts it, is a mission of help and healing. It rests on the assumption that life, no matter where it is lived or what its environment,

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is full of occasions in which one man may help another. No lot, however fortunately it may be cast, is for any length of time self-poised and above the need of friendly counsel and sympathy. The cares of life may be more numerous and oppressive here than there, the sunshine may play a little longer on this spot than on that, the shadows may be deeper in one heart than in another; but no one is permitted to become wholly insensible to human sympathy, or beyond the need of a word of encouragement, or a kindly deed that strengthens and helps. And so Jesus singles out some of the people to whom the religious teacher is especially to address himself.

(1) He is first of all to preach glad tidings to the poor. Poverty is the prophet's problem. It may not always be a curse, but it is admittedly a great trial; and when it is prolonged and unrelieved it is not only depressing, it is a standing menace to virtue and happiness. When the hungers of life are certain and urgent, and the means of subsistence are slender and precarious, when the slowly accumulated gains of industry are ebbing away, or patient labour goes on for months and years without just reward, when the family increases and the income stagnates or diminishes, the mind grows restless and perplexed, and becomes an easy prey to glittering frauds; the heart is weary with increasing cares, and temptations multiply; and the will becomes limp and loses its spring and elasticity. The angel of hope is only a fitful visitor.

The remedy for this critical state of things is twofold. There is the prudent administration of relief which we call practical philanthropy, and there is the not less needful reinforcing of the character by personal sympathy and encouragement, by which the poor are enabled to bear their lot, however hard, with patience, without envy, and even with moral dignity. Both are urgent and indispensable. Christianity holds both in its possession. It is the great almoner of every age, and the ready and cheerful dispenser of courage and comfort. No other institution understands poverty so well, or contributes so much to its relief in sane and wholesome ways. It holds out no social panaceas for the removal of want, and is always free to acknowledge that wherever there is weakness or misfortune there will probably be want; but every active church is a busy hive of benevolent enterprise, and a storehouse of generous philanthropy. It is quite impossible to form any adequate idea of the helpful activities of the Christian Church in every part of the world. The cynical sceptic may criticize religion, and the irreverent scorner may flippantly condemn its supporters and administrators; but the best friends of the poor in every land are the faithful disciples of Jesus who in every pulpit and in every church are preaching an encouraging gospel to the indigent, are working for the poor and friendless, and are entering the haunts of misery and vice with the bread of strength and the wine of sympathy.

¶ In one of the English Men of Letters' series, Mr. Edmund Gosse deals with the life of Jeremy Taylor. And speaking of his remarkable sermons Mr. Gosse says that the absence in them of any reference to the life of the poor is a singular fact. Jeremy Taylor preached to an aristocratic congregation in London. Within a stone's throw of his church there was the most aggravated poverty, but the great divine never once alluded to it. And, says Gosse, by way of criticism, 'Is it not a very curious thing that a representative of the meek and lowly Nazarene, in his vision of the world, should see only well-to-do people?'[1]

(2) Then Jesus was sent to heal the broken-hearted. He was not slow to discover that life is full of sorrows which personal sympathy alone can soothe, and so He enjoined upon all His followers the duty and privilege of untransferable service and sacrifice. Some of our obligations as Christian men and women may be delegated to others. We may give our money to aid causes which for valid reasons we are unable to support in any other way. The agents of philanthropy appeal to us for help, and the help is given freely and wisely. But how much human suffering there is which comes closer to us, and lies within the range of our personal experience! How often we are called upon to give ourselves rather than our substance! How many there are whose lives touch our life, who do not need charity, who are not in urgent want, who may even be in full possession of material abundance, yet who are not above the need of friendly sympathy! They are perhaps bearing a load of care and sorrow, which the sympathy of others will greatly lighten, or they are staggering under some secret grief, the gloom

[1] M. J. Macleod, *The Unsearchable Riches*, 57.

of which is not quite so heavy when it is shared by a tried and trusted friend. The mystery of pain is often lifted by a word spoken in due season; and an act done when the heart is soft and tender—so simple and apparently so insignificant—is often enough to let the sunlight through a rift in the cloud, and break the spell of dull despair. By far the greater part of the good we do to each other is of this silent sort that has a depth of sympathy in it, the good that is conveyed unconsciously by a look, or a smile, or a friendly grasp of the hand. The healing flows from us unawares, and we hardly know that any virtue has gone out of us; but all the while our silence may be more effective than our speech, and our mere presence, if only it be bright and cheerful, may prove more potent than any act that we may do.

¶ One Sunday afternoon I was passing through a small ward of four beds, on my way to the larger adjoining ward. There was only one patient in this room, an Australian, wounded in the shoulder and legs, and nearly worn out with dysentery. He was almost too weak to move. As I entered a band was passing the hospital. It was playing a tune which was at that time very popular, 'Keep the Home Fires Burning.' As I bent over the Australian, who lay with closed eyes, the band was playing the lines of the chorus:

> Though the lads are far away,
> They long for home.

Suddenly, over his thin white cheeks the big tears began to roll down. His own heart was yearning for the home so many thousands of miles away. The music died away in the distance and, somehow, the words I meant to say could not find expression. Instead, as I bent over him, some tears from my own eyes dropped on his cheek, and when he looked up, I could only nod my head and turn away. One day, a fortnight or so later, when he was on the high road to recovery, he said to me, 'I want to thank you for your sermon; it did me a power of good.'

'Were you at the service last night?' I replied.

He patted his cheek and said, 'No, it was the sermon that dropped here that cheered my heart. I shall never forget it.'[1]

(3) But the prophet's function does not end here. The man sent by the Spirit of the Lord is and ever must be a liberator. Mankind, though fond of liberty, is constantly weaving fetters for itself. History is very largely a record of the making and breaking of oppressions. And that which is so true of nations and races is just as true of individuals. We are all, more or less, the slaves of habit and passion; and in our personal lives, not less than in the growth of national history, how true it is that external vigilance is the price of liberty. It is seldom that we fall into snares abruptly, and all at once. Slowly and by devious ways a subtle enemy steals into the citadel of the will, which we thought so impregnable; and then, before we know it, the strongholds of character are captured, and we are at the mercy of a subtle foe. It is when we are the captives of indolence that the prophet's startling word sounds like a clarion call to duty and to effort. It is when ease corrupts us, and takes all the moral fibre out of us, and leaves us with little inclination or force to do or to dare, that the sentinel of righteousness makes his appeal to the remnant of honour still remaining within us. His voice is like a tonic to conscience, and, now by pleading, now by rebuke, awakens us from slumber and makes us ashamed of our moral turpitude. And how few of us are so strong and self-reliant as to be able to do without these appeals and warnings, these frequent reminders of our duties and obligations! We tread the sunny path of ease, and suddenly, before we know it, some temptation or difficulty overwhelms us, and we are lost. The words of the prophet come to us before it is too late. They reach us not so much to enlarge our knowledge of right as to deepen our loyalty; for the need that we should repeat the commandments is not half so urgent as the necessity for a thorough bracing of the moral will that we may persistently and steadfastly keep them.

¶ Mr. Harold Begbie has given us a book which he calls *Broken Earthenware,* and by 'Broken Earthenware,' he means the cracked, mutilated jars that have been picked up from the waste heap and been mended and made serviceable for the king. It is a marvellous tribute to the power of Christianity to save and redeem and transform and restore. For, in our study of comparative religions, let us never forget one thing, namely, that no other religion ever even entertains the idea of making a broken vessel new. The book is the

[1] Dr. Carter, *The Gospel to War-Broken Men*, 42.

story of a series of present-day miracles. It tells of the work done by a beautiful, delicate young girl—a Salvation Army lassie—who threw herself into the very wickedest part of London, among the roughs and toughs, to labour for her Master. And the volume is a simple narrative of nine of the jewels that she found and polished for her crown. Let us just instance one—the first one cited. He is called the Puncher. He was a prize-fighter by profession, and it would seem as though he had dropped about as low as a human being could possibly fall and still retain the human semblance. The depravity of the man is almost unthinkable. So low down the incline had he gone that he was seriously meditating the murdering of his wife 'for the fun of it,' and still he was plunging on at a reeling momentum. He was in a saloon drinking at the time it happened. At the time what happened? Well, let us enquire, for something extraordinary took place—that is sure. We cannot stop to detail, but anyway, he came out of the evil resort, went direct to his wife whom he had marked for murder, and this is what he said, 'Mollie, I am going to join the Salvation Army. I am going to see the little angel-adjutant to-night' (this being the name by which the little leader was known in the district). Mollie, of course, was incredulous, but they went to the meeting. They both marched up to the penitents' bench. And now, may we quote from the book? 'I cannot describe my sensations. The past dropped clean away from me; it dropped like a ragged garment. An immense weight was lifted from my brain. I felt light as air. I felt clean. I felt happy. I felt my chest swell. I cannot say what it was. All I know is that there at that bench I was dismantled of all horror and clothed afresh in newness and joy.'[1]

(4) Then the prophet is the herald of light. He is sent to address himself to people in doubt and darkness. Society is full of men and women who are not merely uncertain about the many matters of faith and morals which are open to question, but also sorely perplexed and puzzled about the few central truths which ought to be grasped with assurance. They grope about in mist and fear, and search vainly for some clue to the solemn mystery in the midst of which their lot is cast. Hearsay and tradition do not satisfy them. They long for the peace of positive conviction. To be for ever seeking and never coming to the knowledge of truth does not appease them. Only the man who has wrestled with doubt himself, and, while not satisfied about some things, has yet found an enlightening and living gospel for himself, can be of service to them. To echo their own dismal misgivings is simply to weary them. To tell them they ought to believe, without offering to them something that wins conviction, is to mock them in their direst need. To pour incessantly into their ears the stale conventional dogmas of an unattested theology is to give them stones for bread. What they want above all things is to feel sure of the vital things of religious faith, the knowledge of which is illuminating, and the ignorance of which is depressing. They are contented to take truth in instalments, if only they can be sure that it is truth; but what they cannot endure is hesitation, uncertainty, vacillation. The true prophet has always a positive message full of light and life. His preaching stimulates belief and sustains conviction. Men feel stronger and braver for his word. The hungry wait on him and are fed. The weary turn to him and are helped. The afflicted cleave to him and are comforted.

¶ A man's *belief* of what he proclaims goes far to make it believed by others. So long as he himself has any doubt on the subject, he is not likely to convince those who are in doubt. This is true in every sphere of life. If a man sees his neighbour's house on fire, in the dead of night, his wild, ringing shriek of 'Fire! Fire! Fire! Turn out! Turn out! Your house is afire!' sounds out on the midnight air with a force that is itself convincing. All who hear it know that the one who utters it feels its truth, and wants others to feel it.

Peculiarly is this the case with one who sounds a call to stir a sluggish soul to action, in view of truth that he deems precious and all-important, but which the other is not very anxious about or fully convinced of. Any show of doubt or indecision, on the part of God's herald, is calculated to shake the confidence of the hearer of the message. Every show of earnestness or evidence of intense conviction, on the part of those who stand for Christ, gives added weight to each word of the message. Hearty Governor Andrew, of

[1] M. J. Macleod, *The Unsearchable Riches*, 64.

Massachusetts, said of Abraham Lincoln, when he had assumed the Presidency, 'I'm glad we've got a man who believes something.' If a man would have another believe something, he must believe something himself.[1]

(5) Last of all comes the unexpected. As if in violation of all the laws of thought and all the laws of speech, Christ says, 'to set at liberty them that are bruised.' Did we not read that a few sentences before? Is not another clause to set at liberty those that are bound? Is not this the same thing over again? Is it not sheer tautology, a palpable repetition? Nay! when we examine it we find that the difference is strikingly beautiful and tender. For, in the first clause it is the 'bound', whereas in the second clause it is the 'bruised'. In the first it is people who are in captivity, but in the second it is people who have been incapacitated by their captivity. In the first place the fetters are round the limbs, in the second place the fetters have eaten their cankerous way into the soft flesh and have made the captives cripples unable to avail themselves of the liberty which is offered them. In the one it is the people who are set free, whereas in the other case the people are too bruised to be set free, and before they are liberated they must be made fit for liberty. Here is a bird in a cage whose spirit has not been broken; all that you have to do is to open the door of the cage and it immediately and eagerly regains its liberty, and flies away to God's blue and spacious air, which is its right and joy. But here is another bird, which has hungered and pined long for liberty and unavailingly beaten its frail wings against the cruel bars of the cage so that it lies crouching in a corner, limp and broken, bruised and wounded. It is no good opening the door of the cage; you must gently steal your hand under it, tenderly take hold of the poor frightened thing, nurse and cherish it, hearten and revive it; then it will fly away and regain its liberty. That is the word of our text—not only to open the door of the cage, but to make a man strong enough and able enough to take advantage of that liberty. We have daily cases of this kind; we meet not only men who are down, not only men who are fallen, but men who have hurt themselves by the fall and are unable to get up again; not only men who have got into the grip of sin, but men who have been incapacitated by it and who do not want to get free, who have lost their interest in liberty, very much like the prisoner of Chillon. Bonnivard has been kept in prison for so many years that although he was fighting for liberty he does not want his liberty. He says:

> At last men came to set me free,
> I ask'd not why, I reck'd not where,
> It was, at length the same to me
> Fetter'd or fetterless to be,
>
> . . . . . .
>
> My very chains and I grew friends,
> So much a long communion tends
> To make us what we are;—even I
> Regain'd my freedom with a sigh.

That is it. That is the worst symptom of captivity, that it makes a man incapable of regaining and enjoying his freedom. And it is the glory of Christianity that it prescribes for this symptom, it is the crowning grace of Jesus Christ that He not only liberates men, but makes men fit for liberty. He sets at liberty them that are bruised; He is the Emancipator of bruised souls.

And the last word sums up the whole: 'to set at liberty them that are bruised.' Look at the cardinal words in the passage: 'preach,' 'heal,' 'deliver,' 'give liberty,' 'proclaim!' Can we extract the common virtue of the words? Have they any general significance? Is there any common denominator? May we not say that in all these varied words there is a persuasive sentiment and purpose of emancipation? Are they not all suggestive of an opening, an emergence, a release? Let us review the words: 'Sent to preach': to give the open vision of Divine grace to those whose thought is darkly bounded and imprisoned. 'To heal': to give the grace of comfort to those who are crushed beneath the unintelligible weight of sorrow and care. 'To deliver the captive': to give the open spaces of a noble freedom to all who languish in any form of unholy servitude. 'To set at liberty them that are bruised': to give open passage to all who are lying with broken wing or broken limb, to all whose powers have been shattered by disappointment and defeat. 'To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord': to announce the open door in the present hour, and to say that, by God's grace,

[1] C. G. Trumbull, *Taking Men Alive*, 160.

there is at present right of way from the deepest gloom of the soul into the radiant light of acceptance with God. In all these words there appears to be this general sense of emergence and release. There is an opening of eyes, an opening of doors. In every word the iron gate swings back and there is the sound of the song of freedom.

¶ The first time that John Wesley preached in the open air in England was in a brickyard on Monday, April 2, 1739. He says, 'At four in the afternoon I submitted to be more vile, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining to the city, to about three thousand people. The Scripture on which I spoke was this . . . "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted; to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord"'. No more suitable text could have been chosen. It described the ideal to which Wesley was true to the end of his days.[1]

Recovering of Sight.

Luke iv. 18.—'Recovering of sight to the blind.'

This is one of the works which Christ came into the world to do. How did He do it? Four sight-giving miracles are recorded in the Gospels.

1. The first miracle (Matt. xii. 22) reminds us that the recovering of sight to the blind is a work to which the power of God alone is competent. There is nothing said about the means which Christ employed in giving sight and speech to the unhappy sufferer; it is simply stated that the cure was thorough and effectual. 'He healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.' The controversy which the miracle occasioned did not challenge any one of these particulars. That the miracle was wrought even the Pharisees could not gainsay. They only endeavoured to account for it by suggesting Christ's collusion with the devil: 'This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.' Christ, however, demonstrated by an argument which neither logic nor sophistry could refute that the work was done by the power of God. Hence the specific teaching of this first miracle is that the restoration of sight of the spiritually blind is a work to which the power of God, the Holy Spirit, alone is competent.

2. The second miracle (Matt. ix. 27) informs us that the recovering of sight to the blind is a work which requires the exercise of faith as its condition. 'Believe ye that I am able to do this?' They say unto Him, 'Yea, Lord!' Then touched He their eyes, saying, 'According to your faith be it unto you.' Not that in every instance such an exercise of faith was demanded. In the case last considered, for example, such an exercise of faith was impossible. Perhaps, too, in the case to be considered next, the individual on whom the miracle was wrought was a heathen and had never heard of Christ. But wherever faith was possible, and could reasonably be expected, it was asked, if it was not already offered or seen to exist, as in the case of Bartimeus. This clearly shows that for the opening of the soul's eyes faith in Christ's ability and willingness is indispensable, except where Christ is not previously known, or where some mental incapacity exists in the subject.

3. The third miracle (Mark viii. 22) instructs us that the recovering of sight to the blind is a work which does not always and of necessity complete itself at once. The peculiarity attaching to the Bethsaida miracle was its progressive character. It was a case of gradual restoration. The reason why Christ performed the miracle in two stages is certainly not to be sought for in any difficulty that attached to the work itself; and hardly in the notion of Olshausen that 'a too rapid process of recovery might have been injurious to the eyes'; or in that of Dr. Burton (quoted by Alford), that 'a blind man would not, on recovering his sight, know one object from another, if he had never seen them before.' Scarcely even do we suppose the weakness of the blind man's faith to have been the reason. Rather do we conjecture it to have been a desire to illustrate a special truth about Christ's higher work of illuminating darkened understandings, namely, that it does not always proceed at a bound and complete itself in a moment of time, but some-

[1] J. S. Simon, *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, 282.

times advances by slow and easy stages. If the blind man at Bethsaida was a heathen who had never heard of Christ we can even discover a propriety in making his recovery gradual, as if to indicate the type of conversion to be expected among the uneducated and the heathen. But, passing this, the half-cured man at Bethsaida was a striking emblem of what may be called an imperfect or incomplete conversion. The period of total blindness is departed; yet the light is only dimly seen. The soul's illumination has, as it were, passed only its initial phase. The fact, however, that the light has begun to dawn is full of comfort, inasmuch as it is better to be half-illumined than to be wholly in the dark—to be seeing 'men as trees, walking' than to be seeing nothing; and it is full of promise, as giving a guarantee that the work of grace will yet be carried to a termination. But it is likewise full of danger, lest, resting satisfied with half illumination, we should not only never come to perfect vision, but should even be deprived of what we have attained.

4. The fourth miracle (John ix. 6, 7) teaches us that the recovering of sight to the blind is a work which is not accomplished without the use of means. Doubtless this truth is taught with more or less clearness by all the miracles except the first; but none of them presents it in such striking prominence as that which happened in Jerusalem. Attempts have been made to discover why Christ made use of these particular means, but a prior question seems to be why Christ made use of any means. He could easily have performed His miracles without the intervention of any subsidiary agency whatever. That He chose to employ material and human instrumentalities must have been either (1) to link on His great supernatural works with the ordinary process of nature, as in those cases where a natural fitness appeared to reside in the means, as, for example, in the use of clay and saliva for curing ophthalmia, which use was not unknown to antiquity; or (2) to show that the miraculous agency did not reside in the instrumentality, but in Him who employed it, as in those cases where the utter inadequacy of the means was manifest, for example, simply touching the blind man's eyes; or (3) to assist the faith of the individual in whose behalf the miracle was wrought—as Trench thinks that, in the present case, it may have been a help to the blind man to feel that something external was done; or, (4) as we think, chiefly to intimate that the eyes of the spiritually blind are never opened without the use of means, and that, too, on the part both of Christ and of the spiritually blind themselves, who are thus, in the matter of their soul-illumination, made fellow-workers with Christ. The means employed by Christ are efficacious simply because He makes them a channel of communication for His gracious power. Hengstenberg is doubtless correct in thinking, with Calvin, Beza, and others, that the use of clay and saliva was intended to connect the operation with the original creative work by which the Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground, and to show that the source of healing was in the Divine power, of which the clay and spittle were but the material conductors. The means employed by man are efficacious because employed in obedience to Christ's instructions. The waters of Siloam were, in John's estimation, symbolic of the 'sent' One, who, in virtue of His redeeming work, has become a fount of healing for the souls of men. Yet the prime reason for expecting life and salvation through the Saviour and His work is the fact that He has been sent to us and that we are directed to Him.

¶ Another case of tetanus was that of a Nova Scotian, a magnificently built young fellow, with the finest chest and shoulders I have ever seen. He was so far gone that the able physician who was fighting for his life had almost given up hope. I had a number of praying people to whom I used to send postcards, giving particulars of cases which required the services of what I called 'The Prayer Guard.' I enlisted them in the struggle for this lad's life, and I said to the sufferer, 'Mac, if it is God's will, your life will be won by prayer—and serum. We must fight and pray.'

'God will give me life whichever way it goes,' he replied; 'I'll leave it with Him.' He recovered.[1]

[1] Dr. Carter, *The Gospel to War-Broken Men*, 48.

Bruised.

Luke iv. 18.—'To set at liberty them that are bruised.'

1. Jesus Christ sets at liberty them that are bruised by *sin*. The victims of sin can be divided into two classes.

(1) First, there is the man who has sinned but who hates himself for doing so; he has fallen, but he feels the ignominy and the shame of it all, and when recuperation and liberation come in his way he gladly avails himself of the priceless offer. He is fettered, but he is not bruised; he has gone down, but he badly wants to get up again.

(2) That is the first class. But there is another class, who have sunk immeasurably deeper, the men who have sinned and who have kept on sinning until they have bruised their characters, crippled their lives, and robbed themselves of the power to recuperate. They have not only gone into the prison, but they have settled down in their prison home. The sensitiveness has gone from the conscience; the resistance and the resiliency, the snap and the spring, have gone out of the will, and the affections, like climbing plants beaten down by the tempest blast, are set in the mire and forgotten. They are in a poor way—men who have sinned and who have been incapacitated by their sin. Worse, the hatred of sin has gone; the healthy fear and wholesome shock have passed away, and they have accommodated themselves to their doom, have become reconciled to their degradation. They kiss their very chains and hug their very fetters. Professor Henry Drummond tells us of one who had given himself to sin and to indulgence, and who had to consult a specialist about the blindness which had resulted from his iniquity. The specialist said, 'You must give up your sins, or in three months' time you will be a blind man.' Drummond tells us that the student looked out at the light playing upon the grass, and he said, 'Farewell, sweet light; in three months' time I will be a blind man. I cannot give up my sin.' There is sin not only enchaining a man, but bruising him, incapacitating him, making it almost impossible for him to get up again.

2. Then, Jesus Christ emancipates those who are bruised by *doubt*. This age is an age of questioning and of unrest. Most of us have had to fight our way through the fog and through the night. But there are two classes of doubt.

(1) First, there is the man who doubts, but who does not want to doubt. It may be his standpoint is wrong, it may be his creed is traditional; he is unable to see the truth which is in Jesus. But there is no one who regrets his inability more than he. He is uncertain about many things, but he is certain about one thing—that doubt in itself is not normal to a healthy character or conducive to a vigorous life. He is fettered, but he is not bruised.

(2) On the other hand, there are doubters who not only doubt but luxuriate in their scepticism; they not only doubt, but they do it with avidity, they do it with triumphant glee, they do it with delight and loud defiance; it gives them joy to set themselves against the orthodox convictions of their day. Even worse is the man who uses intellectual flippancy to cover up moral corruption. It is dangerous to play with truth under any conditions; but that man comes near to committing the unpardonable sin who tampers with sin to prop up a false and rotten life. But the worst of all is the man who becomes a doubter through a sense of moral injury, a moral wrong. That is the worst kind of doubt, when a man loses faith in his fellow-men. Hamlet is supposed to be an example of a man who was paralysed by scepticism. If he was—and many reasons are given for his scepticism—perhaps the core of it is this: Hamlet lost faith in his own mother; he lost faith in his uncle, then in his mother. And God help the man who loses faith in motherhood; he is left in sevenfold darkness. And when a young man in a large city loses faith in humanity and in womanhood, God help him; he is a poor creature; it is a bad case. It is not an intellectual fetter; there is a moral bruise beneath it.

3. Further, Jesus Christ sets at liberty them that are bruised by *trouble*. There is hardly a man or woman in any service or congregation who has not some troubles, disappointments, sorrows. There is perhaps a bright face, but there is often something behind, for difficulties affect people in different ways; difficulties affect people according to their temperaments. Some people

recover quickly from sorrow; they do their utmost to forget the sting. They have the power of rebounding and reacting; they have not lost their Christian elasticity and resiliency. But there are others who take troubles in a very different way. They feel that all the glow and elasticity have gone out of life. Such men lose interest in everything, and, like the English king, they never smile again. They give up religious work, they have no heart for it, they say; they retire from public service; all the sources of their interest are withered and dried up. As far as large tracts of their lives are concerned, they commit suicide. And there is not only physical suicide, there is also spiritual and intellectual and religious suicide.

¶ J. M. Barrie, in his beautiful book on his mother, tells us how she was laid prostrate by the death of an elder brother; how she kept to her room, how she was dumb and silent, and how the doctor sent him in, a younger brother, and how the mother seemed to think it was the lost boy come back again; and how J. M. Barrie said, 'It is not him, mother, it is only me.' And how that rallied the suffering woman, and how she became herself again by the introduction of another son into her horizon. That is about the only way of dealing with cases like that; introduce into their horizon Him who said, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest'; Him who put His shoulders under the burden of humanity; Him who will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax; Him who is stronger than the strongest father, tenderer than the tenderest mother.[1]

The Book.

Luke iv. 20.—'And he closed the book.'

'He closed the book.' That was an act of unconscious, and yet profound, symbolism. There was a Divine and an eternal meaning in it as Christ performed it. Any other reader, probably, would have closed the book when he had finished the lesson, but the circumstance would not have been recorded, would not have been significant. All the significance lies in the fact that Christ did it, and that He did it just then. It meant that all the phase of Judaism represented by priest, and prophet, and temple, was now a closed chapter, and that a new order had begun. Religious truth was now entering upon a fresh stage of development. The old legal and ceremonial forms were henceforth to give place to a religion that should be at once more spiritual and more humanitarian. Type and shadow were now to pass away in order that the eternal substance of religion might be made manifest in and through Him. 'The law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ.' That was the meaning of the act. That, perhaps, is why it is recorded. Christ perhaps intended nothing by it. He must have closed the Book under any circumstances. But the closing of the Book closed also a dispensation. That is the significant thing. Religion itself was born again in the moment when He rolled up that parchment, and put a period to 'that which was in part,' in order that 'that which was perfect might come.'

1. He closed the Book because He is greater than the Book. The Book was the shadow: He was the reality. The Book was the echo: He was the voice. The Book was the forecast; He was the fulfilment. The Book was the teaching; He was the teacher. We can in some measure realize the tremendous significance of that simple act of closing the Book, when we remember that the sad, strange story of the Jewish people, from that day to this present time, turns on their inability to interpret it.

We have the Book with us. It is a greater Book now, far greater. Its prophecy is illumined by its history. Instead of being but a whisper of that which shall be, it is now also a story of that which hath been and now is. We can read the meaning of long centuries of sacrifice, and interpret the dim light of all religious altar-fires, in the three hours of anguish on Calvary. We can catch the hidden meaning of prophecy, as we read the story of Jesus of Nazareth. Side by side with Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones we can set the story of the day of Pentecost. Yes, it is a larger Book now, a deeper Book, a holier Book; but still Jesus is greater than the Book. Still there ever comes to men, if they will receive it, the voice that is mightier than the voice of the Book, the message that is warmer and more vital than the message of the Book—the living grace of the closed Book.

[1] T. Phillips.

2. He closed the Book that He might open it. He laid it aside for a moment that they might learn what it meant. While it was open before their eyes, and they were beholding nothing beside it or beyond it, they could not understand it. Nobody has ever been able to understand the open Book till he has closed it. Life is said sometimes to be a commentary on the Bible. But perhaps it is truer to say that the Bible is a commentary on life. Apart from life, from experience, we cannot understand it. And the life is more than the Book. 'I wish,' says someone, 'that I could read the Bible *in the original*.' That is a laudable wish. And it is, indeed, the only way in which any man can read his Bible—to understand it. There is one original language in which the Old and New Testaments are written, and it is the language of human experience. Hebrew is useful, and Greek is still more useful; but life is essential. The deep, original language of the human heart in its loves and its clingings; the deep, original language of the human spirit in its aspirations and its self-consciousness; the language of hope and love, sorrow and need, endeavour and patience and victory—this is the original language of the Bible. The truths of the Bible become clearer to us, not as we ponder them upon the printed page, not as we grapple with them as abstract dogmas, but as we close the Book and take its profoundest messages into the setting of our daily life.

(1) 'Like as a father pitieth his children.' A man may read those words in the beautiful, musical Hebrew, or in the nameless grace of our Authorized Version, but the deepest wealth and comfort of that immortal simile is given to him at the cradle of his own little child.

(2) 'Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee.' If the great Biblical scholar can tell us anything about that promise that is worth telling, it is not because he knows the force and history of every Hebrew root in it; it is because he knows what it is to lean a tired heart on the tireless help of the Eternal Love. The authority on this text is not the man with the best education; it is the man with the biggest burden and the simplest faith.

(3) 'He is able to succour them that are tempted.' What does that mean? Bishop Westcott has a beautiful comment on those words; but he does not say the simplest and profoundest thing about this text. No one can say it. But everyone may live it. Let a man have a chance of doing a seemingly slight wrong, and reaping a seemingly enormous advantage; let him feel the devil looking over his shoulder, interested in the wording of a letter, the figures in a ledger, the conduct of a deal—and he has the chance to know the last deep meaning of succour for the tempted. So there is a light that shines from the closed book, an exegesis of experience.

3. He closed the Book because it was only a book. We must not forget that. If we forget that we shall make all sorts of mistakes. We do right to call it *the* Book, but we must not forget that it is *a* book. It has the limitations of a book, the mistakes of a book, the obscurities of a book, the impotence of a book. And while it is the treasury of the most profound and unquestionable and authoritative in books, it is still only a book. There is something more than the Book. There is a life, a living passion, a moulding faith, a lifting hope; and they are greater than the Book. This world of ours to-day is very wise; and because it is very wise, it is also very foolish. That is the way with the wisdom of this world. It carries with it great capacities for folly. And this dark world has looked at the Book. It has said to the scientist, and the historian, and the Egyptologist, and the Hebraist, and the Greek scholar, and the student of long, slow world-movements: 'Come, and let us have a committee-meeting upon the Book.' And the scientist has given us the beautiful story of evolution, and set for us the literal story of Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden among the beautiful myths of the world's infancy—a poem of the world's childhood, with truth at the core of it, inasmuch as it is true that, however man was made and however long he was in the making, in the beginning God made him. And the historian and the Egyptologist have shown us that the far, dim history of human life—of the Semitic people—cannot be read as one would read contemporary history; that there are grave and persistent obscurities as to the identity of individuals, the length of periods, and the exact nature of the original facts that form the germ-life of the stories we read. And the master of Biblical

language has shown us the difficulty of attaching exact meanings to every word and phrase of Holy Writ. And the theologian—well, he has said ten times as much about the Sacred Writings as all the others put together; but he often contradicts his brother theologian, and occasionally contradicts himself. And sometimes a devout and godly soul peeps in at this committee and says, 'They are taking away my Book.' My friend, they are not doing anything of the kind. They could not if they tried. But you yourself will be happier about the Book, if you remember and interpret what the Master did with the Book. He read in it and then He closed it, and made them all look at Him and listen to Him. 'This day is the scripture fulfilled in your ears.' If the Book were a treatise on the physical world, geology would have discredited it; if it were the literal history of a people, the historian would impugn it; if it were written in the interest of any set of dogmas, the theologians between them would have pulverized it by this time. But it is a Book with one object, to reveal Him. When the eyes of all that are in the synagogues are fastened on Him, then have the Scriptures served their rightful purpose—and not till then.

¶ Revelation is not simply or mainly *through* Christ, as though He were no more than an agent, but *in* Christ as Himself God. In fact, Christ is Revelation—its soul, its substance, its centre and circumference, its all in all. Revelation is not a series of propositions arranged in logical order concerning Christ; not even His ideas of God and man, sin and forgiveness, apart from Himself; not even the magnetic facts of His ministry, life and death and resurrection, apart from Himself; not the energies of wisdom and light, of healing and goodness, apart from Himself; but *Himself,* His personality, all that which makes Him the one gracious and great, human and Divine, being that He is. He, Christ, is the whole content of Revelation. He is the permanent and indestructible centre of both Testaments, the unchanging, inexhaustible seed sown in all the various human fields of the world. As Luther said, in his strong way, 'Jesus Christ is the King of the Book.' He is the true and actual object of our faith; not any 'code of rules of conduct,' not any theories of Divine action on men, but Jesus Himself, who everywhere bids us 'come to Him,' and always assures us that He is our light, our life, our rest, our peace, and our salvation.[1]

Christ's Universal Appeal.

Luke iv. 22.—'And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.'

THEY bare Him witness. They had heard rumours of His deeds, and perhaps also His words, in other towns, and they now had the evidence of their own eyes and ears. And yet they wondered. The half had not been told them. 'They all bare Him witness, and wondered.' Let us emphasize this 'all,' for our purpose is to set forth the adaptation of Christ's teaching to the needs of all sorts and conditions of men.

1. He had something to say to *the poor.* And the poor of His time were poor indeed. We make a distinction between 'God's poor' and the 'devil's poor.' We take a sympathetic interest in the relief of such as are thrifty and industrious but unfortunate. Our Lord, however, had a place in His heart for the ne'er-do-weels; for such as are wandering our streets to-day thriftless, penniless and friendless. There are women whose faces are sodden with drink, drawing thin shawls around their shivering shoulders. There are men with sunken cheeks and watery eyes, shuffling along with hands stretched out for alms. Who cares? Friends they have none. They live forlorn, die unlamented and are buried without ceremony in the potter's field. Who cares? He cares! The heart of Jesus is warm with pity toward them; His gospel makes room for them; He hears their helpless moan, their bitter cry. Once when He was asked for His Messianic credentials, He replied: 'The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.' The meanest beggar in the world has one true Friend.

2. And He had a message for *the rich.* The rich in those days were very rich, for the wealth of the world was concentrated in the hands of a

[1] J. Clifford, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 98.

few. But our Lord did not denounce them indiscriminately. He respected the rights of poverty. He recognized the fact that a man may have abundant possessions and yet be righteous. But He warned them against avarice: 'It is easier,' said He, 'for a camel to pass through a needle's eye' than for a man whose heart is set upon riches to enter the Kingdom of God. He told them it was better to part with all their earthly possessions than to lose life, character and endless happiness: 'Go, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor,' He said to one whose wealth was His hindrance, 'and come, follow me.' He stated plainly that there were rich men in hell and poor men in heaven. He showed how a man might be very respectable, clothing himself in purple and fine linen and faring sumptuously every day, and still be guilty of unconscionable folly. He spake this parable unto them: 'The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully; and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.'

3. He had much to say to *working-men*. He was Himself a member of the Third Estate. He knew what it was to shove the plane and drive the saw, to grow weary and wipe the perspiration from His brow. One word of His, 'The labourer is worthy of his hire,' has in it the possible solution of all controversy between capital and labour. He sympathized with honest toil; He knew the fret and worry and fatigue of bread-and-butter work; and He knew the proneness of the toiling class to lose themselves in the sordid routine of common tasks. He stands at the door of every workshop saying, 'O men of labour, let your souls rise above the hand-to-mouth struggle! Be in your labour, yet not of it. Be not unmindful of higher service; give room to nobler aspiration.' He stands in the midst of the common people as He stood among them on the slopes of Olivet and urges the lesson of the life of trust: 'Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? . . . Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, . . . shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought for the morrow. 'But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.'

4. He had a message for *the wise*. Sharp was His rebuke to those who were wise in their own conceit. Some of the wise in those days were deeply concerned in such questions as, 'How many steps are there in a Sabbath day's journey?' They were sophists, splitters of hairs. 'Woe unto you, blind leaders of the blind,' He cried; 'ye have taken away the key of knowledge! Ye stand in the doorway of the Kingdom of Heaven, refusing to pass in yourselves and blocking the way of honester people who fain would enter in.' But others of these Doctors were not '*sophoi*,' but '*philosophoi*,' that is, honest seekers after truth; and He gave them great truths to ponder. To one such who visited Him under cover of night He announced the great doctrine of Regeneration, evoking the response, 'How can these things be?' Whereupon He followed it with a greater doctrine, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' If Nicodemus was in quest of sublimities and profundities, here indeed was something to think of. When that eminent Rabbi left the home of Jesus, bewildered and wondering, the great ocean of unfathomable truth was rolling before him.

5. He had a message also for *the simple*. He

took a child upon His knee and said, 'Except ye become as little children in your attitude toward truth, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of God.' On another occasion He lifted His eyes to heaven and said, 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.' The truths which were announced by this great Teacher were indeed so profound that the wise may ponder on them for ever, and yet so simple that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err in this heavenly thoroughfare.

6. He had a message for *doubters* also. He lived in an age of doubt. The Jews were weary of an empty liturgical service, and the gods of the Pantheon had lost their hold on the minds of the people. There were agnostics who said, like Pliny the elder, 'There is only one thing certain, namely, that there is nothing certain.' There were others who, with a desperate abandon, lent themselves to an utter denial of all truth. Such was Pilate, who, with a curling of the lip, asked of Jesus, 'What is truth?' The great Master cast no pearls before him; He answered not a word. But there were others still who, having lost their bearings, longed to know. One such went wandering in the darkness, after the crucifixion of Jesus, like a blind man groping along the wall. Poor Thomas! His best Friend was dead, his fondest hopes were crushed. He had heard in a roundabout way of the resurrection of Jesus, but he was incredulous; it was indeed too good to believe. For all such doubters, grieving by reason of their unbelief and eager to learn, the Master has infinite sympathy and consideration: 'Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.'

7. And He had much to say to *believers*. What a high ideal of character He sets before them! 'Be ye perfect; be ye holy, for God is holy.' And what a searching word as to their influence! 'Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.' And what frequent and urgent exhortation to usefulness! 'Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest? Behold I say unto you, Lift up your eyes and look on the fields; that they are white already unto harvest.' The barren fig-tree, the parable of the talents, the stumbling-block and the millstone, the great commission—all these are for believers. His standard of Christian living is very high: 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.'

8. And most searching of all was His message to *hypocrites*. This concerns all who are living under a mask. He saw them ostentatiously flinging their golden offerings into the treasury; and when a poor widow came, modestly dropping in two farthings, He said, 'Behold, she hath given more than they all.' He saw them wearing long robes, with broad phylacteries, and frontlets between their eyes, standing at the corner of the streets and making long prayers in order to be seen and heard of men; whereupon He said, 'Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are. . . . But the publican standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me a sinner. I say unto you, This man went down to his house justified rather than the other.'

9. But sweetest, tenderest and most helpful was His word to *the sorrowing*. 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.' In those days when the dream of immortality had grown thin and tenuous and the bereaved were almost without hope He stood beside the open grave saying, 'I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.' He bade them lift up their eyes from the darkness of the grave to the open heavens: 'In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have

told you. I go to prepare a place for you.' There is to be a glorious reunion of saints in the better life.

10. Most of all, He spoke to *sinners*. He came to deliver them from the shame and penalty of their sins. The reproach of His enemies was, 'He is the friend of publicans and sinners.' His defence was, 'I am come to seek and to save the lost.' He was not ashamed to converse with the woman of Samaria by the well of Sychar at high noon, though He knew that the finger of every passer-by would be pointed at Him. He perceived that her sin-stricken heart was longing for pardon and restoration to purity, and He put the cup of living water to her thirsty lips. His whole ministry was passed in seeking the lost. The love of the great Father has never been so wonderfully set forth as in His three great parables: a woman with a lighted candle seeks anxiously a lost coin; a shepherd with lantern in hand goes out on the dark mountains after a lost sheep; a father looks longingly toward the hills over which his wayward son went long ago to waste his substance in riotous living, and when he sees him returning, in rags and tatters, he goes forth to meet him while he is yet a great way off, and falls upon his neck and kisses him. This is the message of Jesus to sinners: The only-begotten Son of God has come forth to seek them. His last miracle, as He hung upon the cross in anguish, was to save a malefactor who, grieving over a mis-spent life, was dying by His side: 'To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.' So He proves Himself willing to save, eager to save, able to save, even unto the uttermost. He is indeed the Friend of sinners. He hath power on earth to forgive sin.[1]

Jesus' Mission.

Luke iv. 24.—'This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

Both the teaching and the practice of Jesus interpret this definition of His mission. His religion was a religion of humanity. He came to give a new creative impulse to benevolence and so a new meaning to human life. He put the heretical but humane Samaritan above the callous priest and Levite. He pictured life as an estate left by an absentee landlord in the care of a steward who would be tested by his treatment of the tenants. The nations accounted those great who wrung service from their inferiors; Christ accounted those great who rendered service to others. He esteemed no acts of genuine goodwill insignificant. Two farthings in a contribution box or a cup of cold water to a thirsty pilgrim, if the gift of a generous spirit, He accounted an act of religion. To the men and women whom society, then as now, regarded as outcast sinners He brought promise of pardon and hope of a new life. But the man who devoted himself to accumulating and investing wealth he called a fool. He declared that hell would be the doom of the rich man who daily feasted sumptuously and left the beggar at his door uncared for, and of the Pharisees who devoured widows' houses and for a pretence made long prayers. In the only description of the last judgment which He ever gave, He declared that the Judge would measure men, not by their creed, their church attendance, or their scrupulous observance of prescribed rituals and ordinances, but by their treatment of their fellow-men. The fact that they had never known Him and were not conscious that they had rendered Him any service would not condemn them. The fact that they had known Him and confessed Him as their Lord would not save them from condemnation.

1. His life illustrated His teaching. He gave Himself with utter abandon to the service of others. Were they hungry, He fed them; sick, He healed them; crazy, He restored to health their distraught minds; ignorant, He taught them; in despair, He brought them hope; isolated from their fellow-men by their pride, He pierced the walls of their prison-house with sharp invective. No service was so lowly that He was unwilling to render it. Once His disciples, who had been out all night fishing and were disheartened by their failure, when they came on shore found that He had cooked their breakfast for them. Once they had walked the dusty streets of Jerusalem with sandalled feet, hotly contesting their respective rights to places of pre-eminence at the supper table. He waited till they had settled this important problem, then He girded

[1] D. J. Burrell, *The Wondrous Cross*, 85ff.

himself with a towel as their servant and Himself washed their feet. Finally, He freely offered up His life for enemies who hated Him, and for companions of whom one betrayed Him, one denied Him, and the rest, with one exception, abandoned Him.

2. Nor was it merely the unhappy condition of the common people which moved His sympathy. At the very outset of His ministry He perceived clearly that the secret of the highest happiness and of the most poignant sorrow is in the spirit of man; in his character, not in his condition; in what he is, not in where he is. He saw clearly that He could not fulfil His mission by merely feeding the hungry. Even if He turned the stones into bread the relief would be but slight and temporary. Heart hunger is more difficult to bear than bodily hunger. The blessed are not the rich but the lowly in spirit; not the sorrowless but those who are strengthened by their sorrows; not the grasping who acquire much, but the unselfish who inherit from their Heavenly Father what He chooses to bestow upon them. Alas for you rich! He cries, for you have received your consolation. Alas for you that are full! for you shall hunger. Alas for you laughing ones! for you shall mourn. Alas for you of whom all men shall speak well! for so did their fathers of the false prophets. These four types of men whom we are apt to envy—the rich, the full, the merry and the popular—Christ pities. The rich, not because he is rich, but because he has got that for which he has been striving; the satisfied because he has no aspirations; the laughing ones because life is serious and they never take life seriously; the man whom all men praise because all men never praise the man who with courage and real power is making the world better than it has been.

3. Jesus looked upon the crowds of ignorant men and women with compassion; not chiefly because they were poor, oppressed, or hungry, but because they were a prey to demagogues, ill-led and unprotected, like sheep without a shepherd. Neither their ignorance, their weakness, nor their sins alienated Him. Sin He counted a disease; an insane conscience was to Him like an insane mind. The Son of Man, He said, has come to seek and to save the lost—to seek, not merely to save those that sought Him, to call to repentance, not merely to answer the repentant when they called. And in these sayings He was interpreting the spirit of His Father.

Animated by this spirit, Jesus not only preached in the open fields and in private houses wherever He could find an audience. He visited in the homes of the despised tax-gatherers and the outcast sinners and sat at table with them. The Pharisees called Him the friend of publicans and sinners, in which saying they unwittingly told the truth; and a glutton and a winebibber, in which they consciously lied. And yet, was it consciously? Or were they simply unable to conceive why anyone should attend a feast of publicans and sinners unless He was attracted by the chance to eat and drink without restraint? Even in His indignation against pride and false pretence Jesus was pitiful. By His public invective against the men who devoured widows' houses and for a pretence made long prayers He endeavoured to pierce the fortress which their pride had erected, and He ended His invective with a cry of lamentation: 'How can ye escape the damnation of hell?'

No one will claim that benevolence was born in the first century. Pity for the suffering, mercy for the wrong-doer existed in the world before Christ. But in His birth they were reborn. From being an incident, the service of the needy gradually became, wherever the influence of Jesus Christ went, one of the great objects of life.

¶ Lecky, in his *History of European Morals*, has eloquently contrasted pagan and Christian philanthropy: 'The greatest things are often those which are most imperfectly realized; and surely no achievements of the Christian Church are more truly great than those which it has effected in the sphere of charity. For the first time in the history of mankind, it has inspired many thousands of men and women, at the sacrifice of all worldly interests, and often under circumstances of extreme discomfort or danger, to devote their entire lives to the single object of assuaging the sufferings of humanity. It has covered the globe with countless institutions of mercy, absolutely unknown to the whole pagan world. It has indissolubly united, in the minds of men, the idea of supreme goodness with that of active and constant benevolence. It has placed in every parish a religious minister who, whatever may be his other

functions, has at least been officially charged with the superintendence of an organization of charity, and who finds in this office one of the most important as well as one of the most legitimate sources of his power.'

4. But the sceptic need not go back to the past for an illustration of the power of Christ to awaken in human souls 'the Enthusiasm of Humanity.' There never was a time in the history of the world when so many men and women were engaged in varied endeavours to relieve and succour their suffering fellow-men. Look once more at these words of Jesus defining His mission and compare with them what men and women of our time, of every sect and of none at all, are doing to fulfil that mission—often with no consciousness that it is a Christian mission which they are fulfilling and that the spirit which inspires them came from the Man of Nazareth.

It is this Christ spirit which inspires the movement throughout Christendom, not merely to ameliorate the sufferings of the poor but to abolish poverty. The social reformers of our time are not always wise in their methods or Christ-like in their spirit. Too often social reform has been marred by class envy, jealousy, and greed. Nevertheless the Christ spirit has animated many single-taxers who have attributed all poverty to the private ownership of land, many socialists who have attributed it to a false organization of productive industry, and some political teachers who have endeavoured to inspire their scholars with the ambition to cure poverty by bringing about a better distribution of wealth.

It is this Christ spirit which has inspired society with the endeavour to discover some form of help for every form of physical handicap—limbs for the lame, eyes for the blind, hospitals for the sick, institutions for the defective and the insane.

It is this Christ spirit which has inspired what is inadequately termed prison reform, but what is nothing less than an endeavour to provide a cure for crime, not merely a punishment, to fit punishment to the criminal rather than to the crime, and so make the object of criminal law the protection of the community and the cure of crime, not the gratification of revenge.

It is this Christ spirit, seeking by a common effort to save society from the ignorance which imperils it, which has created and maintains the public school; has established social settlements; has inspired the better forms of socialism; and has sent thousands of Christian teachers, doctors, and preachers to carry into foreign lands and into the poorer portions of our own land the message of Christ's sermon at Nazareth.

¶ It is this spirit that led such a man as Professor Albert Schweitzer to devote his life to the service of the natives of Equatorial Africa. Listen to what he says: 'I gave up my position of professor in the University of Strasbourg, my literary work, and my organ-playing, in order to go as a doctor to Equatorial Africa. How did that come about?

I had read about the physical miseries of the natives in the virgin forests; I had heard about them from missionaries, and the more I thought about it the stranger it seemed to me that we Europeans trouble ourselves so little about the great humanitarian task which offers itself to us in far-off lands. The parable of Dives and Lazarus seemed to me to have been spoken directly of us! We are Dives, for, through the advances of medical science, we now know a great deal about disease and pain, and have innumerable means of fighting them: yet we take as a matter of course the incalculable advantages which this new wealth gives us! Out there in the colonies, however, sits wretched Lazarus, the coloured folk, who suffers from illness and pain just as much as we do, nay, much more, and has absolutely no means of fighting them. And just as Dives sinned against the poor man at his gate because for want of thought he never put himself in his place and let his heart and conscience tell him what he ought to do, so do we sin against the poor man at our gate. . . .

Moved by these thoughts I resolved, when already thirty years old, to study medicine and to put my ideas to the test out there. At the beginning of 1913 I graduated as M.D. That same spring I started with my wife, who had qualified as a nurse, for the River Ogowe in Equatorial Africa, there to begin my active work.'[1]

When Jesus breathed upon His disciples and said 'Receive ye the Holy Spirit,' He did but symbolize that inspiration which, by His teaching, His life, and His unseen but not unrealized com-

[1] A. Schweitzer, *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest*, 1.

panionship, He has been giving throughout the centuries to His loyal friends and followers, and what He then said to the Eleven He has been saying to all who love Him and love the truth and life which He has exemplified: 'As the Father hath sent me into the world, even so send I you into the world.' They who have accepted this commission, though they never knew who gave it to them, they who have accepted this spirit of love, service and sacrifice, though they knew not whence it came, are His followers. There have been in the Church many an ambitious Caiaphas and many a greedy Judas who were none of His; and there have been without the Church many a repentant and generous Zaccheus who has made Him his guest without knowing whom he entertained, and many an heretical Good Samaritan who has manifested by his life the spirit of Jesus, though he worshipped not in Jerusalem.

The Response to Faith.

Luke iv. 27.—'There were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet: and none of them were cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian,'

WHY only Naaman? Because he alone came seeking to be cleansed. He alone asked for cleansing.

1. Is there anything more remarkable in our Lord than His reticence, His silence? How seldom He will speak until He is questioned. He will go only where He is asked. Man must seek Him out and find Him. 'Rabbi, come down, ere my child die.' From the first hour it was so. He did nothing until somebody had discovered Him and appealed to Him. Two men, Andrew and John, followed Him uninvited. Only when they asked, 'Rabbi, where dwellest thou?' did He draw them further. 'Come and see.' All through He waits upon circumstances to prompt His actions and His speech. The typical formula throughout is '*Jesus answered* and said.' He answered; He spoke because a question had been put, a problem had been raised. He spoke because He was aware of a human need that was urgent and insistent. He suffered this always to guide Him. Even when He sat on a hill or in a boat and spoke at length, it was in view of some local crisis, some determining occasion, some emotional moment. He never took an initiative that was not suggested by the human environment. Was there ever an ardent reformer, a spiritual revolutionist, who lent himself so completely to the touch of surrounding incident, and allowed the changes and chances of the hour so largely to define and evoke His activities?

Time after time Jesus must have passed a blind man sitting by the roadside, in helpless beggary, who never stopped Him by a cry of 'Thou Son of David, have mercy upon me'; and if he would not cry, our Lord must pass on, uninvoked, unarrested. Ten lepers had lifted up their voices; but what of the others, who went shuddering past, shut up in their own misery, without eyes to see what might save; without the wakening of any hope that might evoke help? What of the sick who moped in sullen gloom, and never put out a hand to reach His garment? Surely He was only waiting for them to give Him His opportunity. Surely His pity was ready to leap out at a touch. Surely His heart burned within Him as He looked upon them. Why will they not see? Why cannot they speak? Yet if they will not, He must pass on and do nothing.

2. This restraint set on the Divine compassions by human failure to evoke them runs down very deep into the principle of the Incarnation. It is startling to us that God should accept such limitations. Yet we can see that the very fact that He accepts it is a measure of His respect for man. It is we who dishonour man by asking God to save him in spite of himself, regardless of his consent and desire. God will do no such thing. Man is for him a reality; no puppet, but a personal will. He cannot be forced or driven. Man is himself: no external power can change him; he can be changed only from within. He must be himself involved in the act that changes him. He cannot be omitted, for he is essential to its validity. This is his high value in God's sight; and to win him, therefore, God is content to wait upon his convenience; to be patient with his delays and refusals; to bide his time; to postpone and hold in reserve and curtail His own purposes, if only at last, by hook or by crook, He may succeed in winning the will of the living man. This is all that He cares to win. All else is worthless if this be left out. The man is not really saved

until our Lord can pronounce, in that strong way of His, 'Thy own faith hath saved thee.'

3. Let us recall this habit of our gracious Lord on earth, whenever we are on the edge of bitter and angry railings against God who hideth Himself; a God who gives so little sign of His presence in a world that so terribly needs Him; a God who waits so long before He acts, and who suffers Himself to be ignored, and forgotten, and despised; and who is dumb when no one regards Him, and will not assert Himself, nor avenge Himself, nor rend the heaven and come down; and lets the long, weary years drag on, without any visible control from Him who should rule from His high throne. Why is He so passive? He does so little. And what He does is so ragged and uncertain and irregular, and fitful, and isolated. It is so unlike that perfection that we should look for in Divine handiwork. Could anything be more strangely accidental in its effects? So often it leaves the prepared ground of the Church severely alone and untouched. It breaks out in spasmodic flashes in odd and unexpected places. When we look for it, it fails us. Where we never dreamed of it, it suddenly succeeds. What does it all mean? We are dismayed. Truly, indeed, the case against us is almost staggering at times.

And then in dark hours, when we are downhearted, we shall remember our Lord on earth. His conduct, His habit, when He was with us, admit us into the secret of the Divine and Eternal counsels. Look at Him in Galilee, and you can see the reflection of what God is doing in the world to-day. Then, as now, there was the same reticence, the same withholding, the same acquiescence in the limitations set by man's unbelief. Then, as now, it seemed left to strange accidents and casual circumstances to determine what should be done. Then, as now, there was a terrible failure in the familiar and privileged places, where everyone would have expected triumphant advance. Then, as now, the Divine pity broke out in sporadic surprises, under the least probable conditions. Then, as now, our own leprosy lay heavy and unlifted, while some far-away stranger found himself healed. Then, as now, the widows in Israel missed the boon that was snatched by some poor woman born outside the favoured line. God is but working now on the lines revealed to us in Jesus Christ. And with Him we know well that it was not through lack of pity or of power that He suffered Himself to be circumscribed, but solely in order to secure human faith, human co-operation; solely because He so valued man's personal will that He would do, and could do, nothing without it.

'I have called to you, called to you, called without ceasing;
On the doors of your hearts I have knocked without ceasing;
I have waited, and waited, with patience unfailing;
I have called, and have called, and have never ceased calling:—
And ye would not!
Come back to Me now, O My sons and My daughters!
Come to Me now with your burdens of sorrow!
Come!—You are weary and heavily laden,
And you shall find rest for your souls!'
And from the earth went up a longing sigh:—
'Yea, come! Lord, come! Come quickly lest we die!'

'How shall I come when the doors you have bolted?
The doors of your hearts you have bolted against Me.
How can I come when the bolts are against Me?
The bolts are on your side the door, not on My side.'

Then heard they Him,—and heeded, for their woes
Had grown beyond their bearing, and their needs
Passed their desires.
Storms they had sown, and whirlwinds they had reaped,
Sands they had ploughed, and garnered only dust;
Their mouths were full of ashes—Dead-Sea fruit
That turned within to gall and bitterness.
Their building left a world with wreckage fraught,
Their vast self-strivings all had come to nought,
Their own devices their own ruin wrought.

'Unbar the Door!'—they cried,—'Unbar the Door,
And let the Lord Christ in!
All other ways have proved our own ways vain,
His power alone can cleanse the world of sin,
His love alone can give us peace again.
Unbar the Door, and let the Lord Christ in!'[1]

Two-Sided Preaching.

Luke iv. 28, 29.—'And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.'

1. What a wonderful ministry was Christ's! In verse twenty-two of the same chapter we read, 'And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.' A few verses after, the whole of the people in the synagogue rose up, being filled with wrath. What a change He wrought! What a wizard He was! Now look at the people. 'How benignant, how complaisant,' they say. 'Did charmer ever charm like this? Hear that music and say was the like ever heard in Israel?' In five minutes more, moved by historical allusions they alone could understand, the same people rose up, being filled with wrath, and would have killed the very charmer whose entrancing power they had just acknowledged.

So is it with Christ's preaching always. For His preaching had two sides to it. Hear Him: 'Blessed are the pure in heart, blessed are the merciful, blessed are the meek, blessed are the peacemakers.' Oh, how the beatitudes flow from His sacred lips! Hear Him: 'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; woe unto you, ye lawyers; woe unto thee, Chorazin; woe unto thee, Bethsaida.' Where are the beatitudes now? It is the same man, in the same brief three years' ministry. Behold, you must take in the evening and the morning to make the day. God's great sky has in it four directions, and each must be estimated and set in its proper relation to the other if you would understand the geometry of God's canopy. Blessed be God, the severity is always against the sin. It is sin that is predestined to go to hell. It is sin that is foreordained to be damned.

[1] John Oxenham, '*All Clear!*' 14.

¶ Some persons do not like these words, 'hell' and 'damned,' yet how wondrously men change in their estimate even of such terms and of the doctrine and preaching with which they are associated. I know a remarkable artist who came to a church with which I was very familiar, and heard a sermon on the damnation of wickedness, and fled away in horror because she did not believe in hell and in damnation. Years have come and years have gone, and she is now in the Roman Catholic Church, where there is a real hell, where there is no want of literal fire. So curiously are we made, and so mysterious is the reaction which is the possibility of our lives.[1]

2. Hear the criticism of this day: 'The sermon was so quiet, so delightfully quiet; the preacher was so pleasant, so tranquil, so composed; never betrayed the faintest excitement.' Or we get it again in another form: 'The sermon was so comforting, soothing, healing; there was balm in it; the preacher was a son of consolation. How richly he dwelt upon the Divine promises! How aptly and happily he applied them to human necessity!' There is room for all that kind of preaching. It is not a kind of preaching in either case to be despised or held in light esteem. Sometimes we need quietness, oftentimes we need healing. The broken-hearted are the majority of every congregation, if they knew themselves. We need the balm that is in Gilead, and we need no other physician than the One who is there. All that is true, so create space for such a ministry, for we need it all.

But where is the other kind of eloquence? It must be the right kind in some instances, at least, because it is associated in this text with the name of the Lord Jesus. This was not some wandering preacher who had gone forth without licence or authority, without adequate cause, and had excited public passion, or religious hatred. This speaker was the Son of God, He who spake as never man spake: and yet when He had uttered a few words, to us apparently so simple and so inoffensive, the whole congregation rose up in a mass, filled with wrath, and led Him forth to the brow of the hill on which their city was built that they might cast Him down headlong.

There should be room for that ministry as

[1] Joseph Parker.

well as the other. We do not like it. Therefore, perhaps, we need it the more. We would rather not be disturbed. We have disturbance enough in business and in politics. When we go to the sanctuary we want to hear something to calm us, and soothe us, and comfort us. That is bad reasoning. When we go to the sanctuary we should go for truth. Sometimes truth will be like a child-angel, so sweet, so tender, so familiar, so domestic, so necessary to the completeness of the household. Sometimes it will be as the voice of a lute; and sometimes it will rage and storm and judge the world and thunder against its iniquities and corruptions. We need it all. Christ's was the perfect ministry, and in Christ we find all this kind of preaching. And only that ministry is right that can be both tender and judicial, comforting and critical, sympathetic and damnatory.

It ought to be the supremest blessing of society to have within it a pulpit that can be both gentle and terrible. When you lose that pulpit you lose a saving element from your social constitution. It ought to be the supremest educational force in morals to have a pulpit that is afraid of no face of clay, to have a pulpit that will speak all the counsel of God, come weal, come woe. Do not let us misunderstand this. He is the great preacher who preaches to himself. Yea, he is the man to be trusted who first takes up the law and smites himself with it, and tells you across the ruins of a broken law that he is criminal as well as preacher. It is an infinite impertinence on the part of any man to preach the law as if he kept it. It is an infinite help to us to hear any man preach the law who says he has broken it through and through, yet by the mercy of God he has crawled home again, and has begun to taste the sweets of Divine forgiveness.

¶ If Jonathan Edwards and his frightful sermon on 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God' represents one extreme, the modern preacher with the doctrine of 'the dreadful consequences of unrepented sin continuing beyond the grave' laid carefully away in the attic of his intellect, may well represent the other. And the last state of the pulpit is at least as bad as the first. If the preacher of the gospel has no moral right to 'put the devil on the throne and call him God,' neither has he any right to let mankind think of God as a magnified and overindulgent parent, who winks blandly at all forms of wrong. It would not be fair to assume that this silence in the pulpit is the cause of so much spiritual superficiality in the pews, or even suggest that it bears any causal relation to the moral rottenness which brought our boasted civilization down with such a tragic crash. But it is fair to remind ourselves that these conditions happen to be contemporaneous, and to recollect Carlyle's striking words, 'When belief waxes uncertain then practice too becomes unsound.' And to the thoughtful man there will come those disturbing words from Jeremiah, 'They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace.' No sane man would advocate a return to the religion of the November fog, whose chief function, as Brierley put it, is the exhalation of gloom. No one wants preaching that appeals to fear, and that alone. The Christianity which 'walks in worried morality' is gone and never ought to come back. But thoughtful men, I believe, can already see the need of that balanced preaching which drives home to the consciousness both the severity and the goodness of God.[1]

The Moral Power of Christianity.

Luke iv. 32.—'His word was with power.'

Our Lord claimed to speak with authority: 'His word was with power.' And behind His claim to authority men felt that there was that which justified His claim. 'All power,' He said, 'is given unto me in heaven and in earth'; power to heal sickness and remove physical evil; power against unclean spirits, to cast them out; power to forgive sins as only God forgives, and to bid the poor fallen sinner go and sin no more. Whether in the physical or in the moral world, Christ claimed to speak with authority; and 'His word was with power.'

Judged by those, at least, among whom He lived and wrought, His claim justified itself in that region where a pretended authority would most easily be found out. Evil spirits recognized His voice. With authority and power He commanded, and they obeyed. If men question His

[1] A. Gillies, *The Individualistic Gospel and other Essays*, 47.

power in the moral world, His power to forgive sins, Christ refers them to that which is open to the eyes of men. 'Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then saith he to the sick of the palsy), Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.'

Thus by proving His power in the world of nature, Christ prepared the minds of the Jews to believe in His power in the moral world. With us it is necessarily different. We have exchanged the naïvely objective attitude of ancient thought for the distrustful introspectiveness of modern days. And it is easier for us to believe in miracles on the strength of what we know of Christ's power in the moral world than to base our faith in that power on the evidence of miracles. We must begin with what is nearest to us. And the present power of Christ in the moral life is nearer to each one of us than the miracles which witnessed to that power in days of old.

When, however, we claim for Christ and Christianity power in the moral world, we notice that there is a sense in which the claim is generally admitted. Christian morality has won its way to a secure position. Men who are far enough from accepting the Christian faith will in most cases admit the Sermon on the Mount to a unique place in the history of ethics. Whatever views may be held as to the Teacher Himself, it is generally, if not always, conceded that His moral teaching is without a rival. As the highest known ideal of character, it appeals to the conscience, and conscience recognizes its superiority. Indeed, if Christianity meant only the publication of certain high moral principles, it might reckon on few open enemies.

1. If we ask in what the power of Christianity lay, as distinct from the authority which a high and pure ideal exercises over the conscience, we find that, first, it placed the Christian in organic relation with a higher and supernatural life. Nothing could have brought the high ideal of Christianity within the region of practical effort for the ordinary man but the belief that a new power had entered into human nature, and that man had become something different from what, in sad experience, he knew himself to be. 'Teach a man,' it is said, 'that he is something greater than he is, and he will soon come to be what he believes himself to be.' Christianity did not merely teach men that they were greater than they thought; it claimed to make human nature greater than it had been. As Jews, the first Christians were familiar with the thought of a people singled out to a kind of priesthood among the nations, brought near to God and entrusted with His oracles that through them He might educate the world. But that old idea could not contain the wider truth, the larger hope of Christianity. So the new wine burst the bottle. Jewish exclusiveness must be abandoned, if the world is to receive the idea of the redemption of man as man, through Him in whom differences of Jew and Gentile, male and female, barbarian and civilized disappear, because He is the perfect Man. That notion of the universality of Christianity, though but slowly realized by the first disciples, is yet implicit in Christ's own teaching; and the Incarnation, both in the order of time and in the order of thought, is the ground of the belief in the brotherhood of man, as it is the justification for that 'enthusiasm of humanity' which has become a catch-word of the day. And the sure hope which carried the Christian forward was a supernatural hope. Chosen out of the world, the object of the world's hatred and persecution, he was yet, as he believed, in the purpose of God, the world's conqueror. By the mere fact of his being a Christian, he was on the winning side in the great moral struggle between light and darkness. The future was with him. For a moment his faith might fail when Christ, the embodiment of all his triumphant expectation, died upon the cross. But with the new assurance of the Resurrection, the new Presence of Whitsunday, he went forth fearlessly to overcome the world, knowing that he was endued with power from on high for the regeneration of man.

¶ A public school boy of about sixteen once told me, with a certain sense of puzzle and mystery, how he had found it happen to himself. He had just been making his first close friendship at school. Neither he nor his friend, he explained, was any better than he ought to be; both constantly did things which they knew to be wrong. 'But,' he continued, 'I've noticed that there are things which either of us will say or do when

we're apart which we never do when we're together.' Each, in a word, brought out the best in his friend, and somehow added the two bests together; so that, while they were in each other's presence, they consciously lived on a higher moral level. In other words, there is a close connection between friendship and moral power, even when the friendship is of the simplest sort; the inspiration comes from the union of selves. And if that is so as between two very average boys at school, ought it not to be far more so when one of the partners is God as well as Man?

In the Divine Friendship it is no longer a case of two limited amounts of human power being, as it were, multiplied together and reaching a total much bigger, it is true, but limited still. It is a case of multiplying the power of the human partner *by infinity,* so that he can quite naturally say, with St. Paul, 'I have strength *for anything* in Him who gives me the power.' That is the power which St. Paul again describes as 'the power of His Resurrection'—the power which showed itself in the most stupendous event in human history. And if indeed *that* power can live and work in a mortal man, through his friendship with Christ, then we have fresh ground for agreeing with St. Paul's own verdict: 'I count all things but loss that I may have Christ as gain . . . that I may know Him, *and the power of His Resurrection.*' The comfort of a friendship is much in itself; but the best part is the moral inspiration which flows from it. And, in the case of Jesus Christ, His friends share His power even in its most startling form—the power which made Him conqueror of death.

The power even of physical life, even at its lowest stages, is literally incalculable. Whole pavements have been lifted and broken by a growth of fungus underneath the slabs. I have seen the photograph of a tomb in Hanover, built massively of granite slabs with iron clamps, to emphasize the boast of the atheist who erected it that 'this grave is not to be opened for ever,' which now lies gaping and dislocated. Why? because, with the corpse, there dropped in the living seed of a tree, which quietly grew till it forced the grave open. And the moral counterpart of such unlikely victories is a commonplace of mission work at home and missionary work among the heathen. The most unlikely lives have been transfigured, and are being transfigured even today, sometimes in a very short space; and not only are they saved themselves, but they become in turn the saviours of others. The power, being infinite, never runs short; the flow only stops when a man ceases to use it. Give it a chance, and it will not only flow in, but flow through and out again, and never cease till it has found a way of fulfilling every human soul. And that is how 'the power of His Resurrection' is meant to, and might, renew the face of the earth.[1]

2. But it was not merely to the belief in the inward abiding of a supernatural life that Christianity owed its power. The Divine touched the human in an intensely personal relationship. We see this most plainly in that virtue in which the Christian stood most opposed to the heathen world, the virtue of purity. Here, more than in either of the other parts of temperance, Christianity was committed to an ideal unknown and unintelligible to heathen morals. We know how the controversy with heathen impurity showed itself in the early days of the Church. What were the weapons which the Christian teacher used? What was his appeal? We have been told of late years that 'there is no true foundation for the strictest sexual morality other than the social duty which the Greeks asserted.' Did, then, the Christian teacher appeal to social duty? Did he appeal, as we might now, to reverence for human personality? to a chivalrous respect for womanhood? to the theoretical, if not actual, equality of all members in the body politic? There is not one word of this, nor could there be, for as yet there was, outside the Christian Church, no recognition of humanity as a family with equal rights. What, then, is the Apostle's appeal? It is direct, personal, immediate. 'What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?' 'Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid!'

Even those relationships which to many in the present day seem to begin and end with man—to be simply relations between man and man—were for the Christian taken up into his personal devo-

[1] E. A. Burroughs, *The Faith of Friends*, 46.

tion to Christ. There were not for him two kinds of love, love to God and love to man. Charity was always a theological virtue, it was love of God, and of our neighbour in God. It was that personal relation of the Christian with God in Christ which saved his service of God from melting away into a dreamy pantheism, and his service of man from being dissipated into a generalized feeling of benevolence. The Master had said, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' And the disciple was quick to interpret the thought. If Christ gave up His life for us, we ought also to give up our lives for the brethren. Such a necessary consequence is it that John fearlessly argues from the effect to the cause: 'We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.' And 'He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?'

Thus, in his devotion to the service of man, no less than in his efforts to attain to holiness and purity in himself, the same power of personal appeal was present with him. Who of us has not felt, in the rush of temptation, the strength and help of human sympathy just when our feet were almost gone. For the Christian, the sympathy of Christ was more than this. It was human, yet Divine. It was as strong as it was tender. It transformed, even while it stimulated, the Christian's effort. No victory to which that voice summoned him in the world within or the world without was too great for him to achieve. 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.'

¶ I think a naturally strong and passionate nature needs to learn by *experience* its own weakness, and that it can do nothing of itself, that it has not in itself, within the limits of its own nature, the power to resist temptation. I think we often *think* we know this, but later we often find we didn't really know it, or if we did we rebelled against it. A good solid knowledge of our own incapacity is the only true foundation of lasting success, the knitting of the heart and will to God in a timidity and fear which is the source of unfailing and dauntless courage. When I know if I let go of Our Lord's hand I go down at once—when I have learnt that, in the bitterness of an utter disappointment with myself—then I learn to cling to Him, and then I feel His power pass into my trembling limbs like a tonic after the fever has burnt out.[1]

3. But, once more, the power of Christianity in the moral life consisted not only in the gift of supernatural strength, and the tenderness of a personal appeal, but in the fact that it dealt with man as a social being. His regeneration was to be in and through a society—a society not of this world, for its laws, its methods, its conditions of membership were other than those with which the world was familiar. In his relation with God man stands alone. Alone, in the awful isolation of his personal responsibility, he must face death and judgment. 'No man may deliver his brother nor make agreement unto God for him. He must let that alone for ever.' But the present age does not need to be reminded that man's nature is social, that he has necessary relations with others, that his individual life is fully realized only in relation with these, and that to seek to stand alone is to dictate oneself, as Aristotle says, 'either beast or god,' greater or less than man. Hence, Christianity is not cast upon the world to triumph by its own intrinsic truth and beauty. Nor are individuals, as individuals, drawn to Christ, without relation to their fellow-men. The Christianity of Christ is truer to human nature than the Christianity of many Christians. For if we honestly ask ourselves, How did Christ will to give to humanity the salvation which He had wrought for it? we are bound to answer, whatever our prejudices may be, He did not write a book; He did not formulate a creed; He founded a society. He selected and trained its first members for the work they were to do, and then sent them forth to gather into the spiritual kingdom, by the power of *personal influence,* those who were far off, as well as those who were near, 'Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.'

¶ We shall do well to avoid congratulations over the signs of progress, and ask ourselves what we can do to increase the reverence which looks up to God for strength and the charity which is empty of self, what in a word we can do to induce a belief in the existence of good. He who believes

[1] *Father Maturin*, 79.

in God will never doubt of a goodness to be found in the lowest and worst. Our work should be to develop everywhere the belief in goodness.

What, then, is to be done? My answer to you is, 'Show yourself as one serving God for nought.' A Life and not a System convicted the world of righteousness and of sin. Your life, even if you never preach and get no converts and have no one calling himself of your Church or your Party, may be effective in making others believe in goodness. To you this year, therefore, my word is, Let your light shine as that of one who does right for right's sake only.

Practically this means that in our private life we should be pure, and that in our public life we should resist the temptation to make proselytes. If in our private life we choose suffering rather than tell a lie, if in matters which concern ourselves we are meek, if in the hour of loss we are patient, if we protect the weak against the strong, we are following in Christ's steps and preaching as He preached the supremacy of right. If in public life our aim is that of making others true, whether they be true Catholics or true Protestants, true Tories or true Radicals, and of so helping them that they may thank God and not ourselves, we shall preach Christ better than if we made a thousand followers, because we shall have shown charity which seeketh not its own.[1]

¶ Wesley's great missionary tours in Devon and Cornwall, and the wild, remote parts of Lancashire, lack no single element of sublimity. To this day the memories of those apostolic journeys are green and precious, and a source of strength and joy: the portrait of the eager preacher hangs up in almost every miner's cottage, whilst his name is pronounced with reverence by a hundred thousand lips. 'You seem a very temperate people here,' once observed a thirsty pedestrian (who was, indeed, none other than the present writer) to a Cornish miner; 'how did it happen?' He replied solemnly, raising his cap, 'There came a man amongst us once, and his name was John Wesley.'[2]

[1] *Canon Barnett, His Life, Work, and Friends*, i. 114.
[2] Augustine Birrell, *Collected Essays*, ii. 98.

Healing and Helping.

Luke iv. 39.—'Immediately she arose and ministered unto them.'

'He touched her hand and the fever left her.'
He touched her hand as He only can,
With the wondrous skill of the great Physician,
With the tender touch of the Son of Man.
And the fever pain in the throbbing temples
Died out with the flush on brow and cheek,
And the lips that had been so parched and burning
Trembled with thanks she could not speak.
And the eyes where the fever light had faded,
Looked up, by her grateful tears made dim,
And she rose and ministered in her household,
She rose and ministered unto Him.

She did not even make her way to the synagogue to offer public praise to the Lord. Nor did she retire to her chamber, that she might place upon the altar some secret thanksgiving to the King. She just took up her duties with a new strength, and found her joy in immediate ministration to those who were round about her.

1. Health is imparted at the touch of the Lord. Our Lord is the health-centre for the race. 'In him was life.' It is not that some life, in certain degree and quality, was found in Him, but that life of every kind finds in Him its source. 'With thee is the fountain of life.' We cannot find that anywhere else. We can no more find healthy life apart from the Christ than we can find heat independent of the sun. 'It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.' Now this Life-source can communicate its treasures to others, and they are communicated through the ministry of contagion. We come into touch with our Lord, and by the touch the health-force is conveyed. Let us mark the analogies in the material sphere. Here is the leper, bearing his loathsome disease, and banned from the society of his fellows. He draws near to the health-centre. 'And Jesus touched him,' and by that touch the forces of health routed the regiments of disease, and the leper became clean as a little child.

It was even so with the blind man. 'And Jesus anointed his eyes.' By that wonderful communion the ministry of the Godhead drove away

the impeding scales from the eyes and the man received his sight. It is the same in the incident before us. Here is the woman fever-stricken and helpless. 'And Jesus touched her,' and before the power of that fellowship the fever left her. Sometimes the initiative appears to be taken by the children of need. Here is a woman bent and broken, threading her way through the dense and indifferent crowd. Now she is borne nearer to the Master, and now carried farther away. But at one favourable drift of the crowd she comes near enough to the Lord to stretch out her hand and touch Him. 'Who touched me?' The disciples were amazed at the simplicity of the question, knowing that the multitude was pressing about Him on every side. But Jesus knew that a touch had been given which had tapped the fountain! 'Virtue hath gone out of me.' Through the channels of that communion the woman had received invigoration which enabled her to stand erect and to walk with ease.

2. Health is sustained in the channels of service. When our health has been restored how shall we maintain it? No life can preserve its spiritual health which in any way seeks to be independent of the Lord. Those to whom the Lord imparts health are still dependent upon Him. But the health forces will flow to us from our Lord through the channels of service. That is so in heaven among those who live in the immediate presence of God. Their holiness is maintained in service. 'They serve him day and night.' It is not all singing and harping in heaven! And even the harping and the singing will be so arranged as to be ministers to communion. You can depend upon it, we shall need one another there, only it will not be a painful need, and we shall find our delight and health in serving one another. The 'spirits of just men made perfect' are kept in their perfection through mutual ministry.

Whether or not this be the principle prevalent in heaven, it is certainly the principle by which health is preserved on earth. 'Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister.' And what did Jesus mean by 'great'? To be 'great' in Jesus' usage of the word is to be morally and spiritually whole. We may justly transpose His words, and read them in this wise—'He that would be healthy and robust among you let him be your minister.' That is how we are to sustain our health; we are to find our strength in service.

¶ Here we come upon the most conspicuous blot in the character of Christian in the Pilgrim's Progress. Everybody is serving him; he is rarely serving anybody. He is not the happiest man, nor does he walk with perfect assurance and triumph. Melancholy often sits upon his shoulders, and he does not walk like a man in exuberant health. I think it is because he is not commonly found in the paths of service. Now Faithful is a healthier man because a more helpful man. He did not see the hobgoblins nor hear the shrieking spirits that menaced and shouted in the ears of Christian. He was a healthier man, and these things did not come his way. The healthy life is a life of ministration, and the sooner we take to it the better.[1]

3. Our field of service must first be sought in the need that is most immediate. Peter's wife's mother began with the humdrum work of the home. Now the first temptation in the converted life is to despise the commonplace. The devil may say to you, now that you are re-born, 'You must be a missionary,' while all the time the Lord is pointing to a bit of needy work at your own feet. The devil gets your mind set upon Africa, and you ignore your own town; you look for a big sphere, and you ignore your own house. There is nothing more insidious than the temptation to take our eyes away from the immediate need and to wait for an imaginary one. This woman began her ministry in her own house, and that is where we must begin. Is there nothing to sweeten there, to illumine there, to beautify there? We are for ever 'seeking for some great thing to do,' and there is a bit of duty lying at our feet which needs to be burnished into acceptable brightness.

How is it in your workshop? Is there a Jesus-finish about your work? Is there a Jesus-fragrance about your relationships with your fellow-workers? You say you wish to go to the foreign field; suppose your workshop were a bit of India, how are you getting ready for the work? Have you the love-girdle on? Or is the devil saying to

[1] J. H. Jowett, *The Silver Lining*, 192.

you, 'You will not want the love-girdle until you are in India?' Arise and minister.

¶ There is no need to seek for opportunities for doing one's duty. We may be sure that God sets in our path just those duties which we can do best at the particular time they confront us, reserving for us harder and more important ones when we shall have fulfilled those He has already placed in our way.

But this method does not suit everybody, and some of us seem to long to fulfil the highest duties at the outset; we strain to reach the summit that we see above us, and feel disappointment because we do not attain to it at once, while, in fact, we have as yet scarcely commenced our ascent. Who has not felt the truth of George Macdonald's words, though we may not even now be willing to accept his advice?

Then fiercely we dig the fountain:
Oh! whence do the waters rise?
Then panting we climb the mountain:
Oh! are there indeed blue skies?
We dig till the soul is weary,
Nor find the water-nest out;
We climb to the stone-crest dreary,
And still the sky is a doubt!

Let alone the roots of the fountain;
Drink of the water bright;
Leave the sky at rest on the mountain,
Walk in its torrent of light;
Although thou seest no beauty,
Though widowed thy heart yet cries,
With thy hands go and do thy duty,
And thy work will clear thine eyes.

Yes, that is the real secret—'work will clear thine eyes.' 'Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might.' Put your heart into your work, and try to look above and beyond the employer that you can see to the Great Master you cannot see.[1]

¶ Let him who gropes painfully in darkness and uncertain light, and prays vehemently that dawn may ripen into day, lay this other precept well to heart, which to me was of invaluable service: 'Do the duty which lies nearest thee,' which thou knowest to be a duty! Thy second duty will already have become clearer.[1]

¶ There are few that rove to find some ampler lot abroad, who do not first neglect the small husbandry of duty at home.[2]

[1] R. G. Dutton, *The Discipline of Life*, 35.

[1] Carlyle. [2] James Martineau.

A Healing Ministry.

Luke iv. 40.—'He laid his hands on every one of them and healed them.'

THIS verse is only one of many in the Gospels which lay bare to us the heart of Christ in relation to sickness and suffering. We cannot too often remind ourselves, nor can we make too much of the fact, that our Lord bare not only the sins of men, but their sicknesses as well, and that this double burden remains a charge upon His Church for all time. The healing of sickness was invariably associated by our Lord with His gospel. It was so, for example, in His first public manifestoes. At the very outset of His ministry He placed these two things in the forefront of His programme: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.' As it was in His programme, so it was in His daily practice. Wherever He went He carried out His programme so far as it was possible for Him to do so, and the Gospels are not more full of His gracious words than they are of His wondrous deeds. 'Go and tell John,' said He to the messengers of the Baptist, 'what things ye have seen and heard: how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.'

And as it was in His programme and in His daily practice, so it was in His commission to His disciples. On every occasion He sent them forth both to preach and to heal. The one was as much a part of their work as the other, because the one was as much a part of His gospel as the other. 'Heal the sick,' He commanded; 'heal the sick, and proclaim that the kingdom of heaven is come nigh.' One great sign and proof of its

coming was just the healing of sickness. So on every occasion, and by every means in His power, our Lord invariably associated the cure of disease with the ministry of His evangel.

1. The first step is *the development of a sense of responsibility* for this matter in the Church of Christ; the development of a sense of responsibility for the suffering and diseased among men. To some extent that sense of responsibility is already awake; perhaps it will be even more true to say that it has never been altogether dormant. From the beginning the Church has been aware of her duty in this matter, and has felt and acknowledged the claims upon her of those who filled so large a place in the heart and in the ministry of her Lord. Nor is that acknowledgment awanting on the part of the Church of Christ to-day. Every effort made by her to combat the force of disease, to bring health and its attendant happiness into the lives and homes of men—her support of infirmaries and hospitals, her employment of medical missionaries and nurses, her care of cripple children, and the like—is an acknowledgment that part, at least, of her work is purely pharmaceutical. Still more, the Christian conscience of her individual members is awake and keenly alive to the Christian character of the work, and to the necessity which is laid upon them to give it their support. All that is good; but something more is needed for the adequate discharge of the Church's duty in this great matter. It is not enough that she should give this work a benediction and a measure of practical support. It is not enough even that she should lay its claims upon the heart and conscience of her people, many of whom, to do them justice, respond nobly to its appeal. What is needed is that the Church of Christ should recognize frankly that it is *her* work, entrusted to her by her Lord, and that she should definitely take up the burden. It is not a mere Christian extra; it is not a by-product of the Christian spirit; it is not optional; it is not secondary; it is a primary Christian duty, part of the original function of the Church, and inseparably bound up with the preaching of the gospel of God's love. If it belongs to the Church to rescue the sinful and to raise the fallen among men; if it is a shameful neglect of her duty to withhold from those who sit in darkness the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, it is no less her sacred mission to minister to the victims of suffering and defect and disease.

2. The second step towards this great end, the end of entering into the mind of Christ in this great matter, is *an awakening of Christian enthusiasm.* A sense of duty, unless it be charged with something of gladness and inspiration, will not carry us very far. Even the Christian conscience is apt to be a side-light unless the mind and imagination and heart are enlisted on its side. Is there nothing in the call of Christ to His Church to lead the holy crusade against disease and suffering—is there nothing in that call to rouse the enthusiasm of Christian hearts? Surely there is! Such a crusade by itself constitutes a rousing appeal, but when it is wedded, as Christ has wedded it, to a holy crusade against sin and wrong and weakness as well, its appeal should be irresistible.

(1) For one thing, it means the saving of the whole man, doing the whole work of Christ. Cotton Mather used a telling phrase, which must strike a responsive note in the hearts of Christian people. He speaks of 'the angelic conjunction of medicine with divinity.' It is an angelic conjunction, and it is fitted to produce angelic results. One has only to think, in this connection, of the work of Florence Nightingale to realize how mightily the spirit of the gospel is reinforced by such a ministry as hers. Men find it all the easier to reply to the redeeming love of God when that love comes to them with the sweet persuasiveness of hands that soothe their pain, and skill that binds up their wounds, and a saving health that puts new hope into their hearts. Think, then, of the Church of Christ being identified in the world with an angel ministry like this! It is not only that she would commend all the better God's love to His suffering children, but she would be ministering to them a full salvation. For disease is as much an alien element in the world as sin itself; there is a mysterious connection between the two, a connection which it seems impossible for us to define; but whatever the connection be, the world will never be God's world till both are driven out of it; God's children will never enter into their full inherit-

ance till both alike are done away. Therefore it is that both must be grappled with till they have to go. In fighting both we are fighting the battle of the Lord, and working out a full, Divine deliverance for human life.

(2) Or, again, think of the promise of victory with which this two-fold crusade is attended. One of the charges freely levelled against the Church of Christ to-day is that of uselessness and ineffectiveness. It is a charge that none who is acquainted with the Church of Christ can have the faintest sympathy with; nevertheless, it is widely spread and believed, especially among the disinherited and poor. Very largely for this reason the Church has been constrained to embark upon social enterprise, an enterprise which, in the judgment of some, is beset with many dangers. Be that as it may, the certainty is that the Church of Christ is being called upon to-day to justify her existence in face of modern conditions, and until she does so the Kingdom of God will tarry. Can she do so in a safer, more necessary, more hopeful, more evangelical way than by bringing a measure of health and hope into the homes of men? Let her make that her task, and she will make an advance along the whole line of her activities. She will begin to win pitched battles for the gospel. Recall once more our Lord's answer to the Baptist. 'The blind,' He says, 'see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.' When he heard that answer, do you think there would be any more doubt left in the mind of our Lord's forerunner, any more doubt that this was He who should come and bring the Kingdom of God with Him? Nor would there be any more doubt or denial in the hearts of many spirits in prison to-day if they saw those indubitable signs of the presence and power of God's Kingdom in the world. That is why, in spite of innumerable fallacies, Christian service is making the advance it is making in the world to-day. It has welded together the two constituent elements of the gospel. Is there any doubt that if the Church of Christ entered upon a similar crusade her advance would be even more swift and sure?

¶ Dr. Arthur Lankester of North India once said: 'If we want to write the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ in very big letters, so that those who cannot read theology, and do not understand science or philosophy, can read it very easily, the best way of doing it, whether it be for an individual, a village, a town, a district, or a nation, is to start medical aid for the poor'. . . . A few years ago there occurred in the city of Tai Yuan Fu, North China, a serious outbreak of a most malignant type of fever. It quickly spread, and amongst the worst sufferers were the poverty-stricken and homeless beggars who are such a characteristic element in Chinese cities. Neglected and loathsome, these poor creatures crept to dust heaps, there to linger out their days of misery and sickness. On the part of their heathen fellow-countrymen nothing was done for them. Who would care to move a finger for such as these! In that city, however, there were medical missionaries, and it did not take them long to make up their minds that something must be done. Be they ever so low, these poor degraded beggars were still men, and men with bodies to succour and souls to save. And so the doctors got hold of a disused open-air theatre stage, opposite to the gates of their hospital, and to that place they conveyed a group of these beggar sufferers. Their filth and horrible condition were impossible to describe. But they were ill with a malignant fever, and their only chance of life lay in steady unremitting attention on the part of the doctors. And so these Christian men, with their own hands, carried food and medicine to them, and day by day lavished as much kindness and skill upon them as if they had been patients of wealth and position. Some, alas! died, yet even in their cases the last hours were less pitiable than they would have been. Others recovered, and were full of gratitude to the Good Samaritans of another nation who had bestowed such love upon them.

Now, wherein lay the chief and most permanent value of that incident? Was it in the few lives saved from death? Nay, not in that, but rather in the telling illustration of the Gospel that was given in this way to the whole of that heathen city.[1]

3. But the final step is reached only when the sense of responsibility and the glow of enthusiasm are deepened into *a holy passion of the soul.* It

[1] R. Fletcher Moorshead, *The Appeal of Medical Missions*, 82.

was this that flamed in the heart of Christ, and it is this alone that will enable His Church either clearly to interpret or rightly to execute His will. There are men and women without number in the world, not all of them belonging to the Church of Christ, in whose hearts this holy passion is found. It is found most frequently among doctors and nurses, and those who are brought into close contact with stricken and afflicted lives. Examples of the high heroism it inspires will occur to all. Cases are on record in which men and women have literally risked their lives and paid the penalty to save the lives of others; and only that same Divine instinct, that same holy passion, can account for the noble ministry of the rank and file of a noble profession. There are men and women by the thousand to-day in lonely country districts, in our city streets and slums, in overflowing hospitals, in laboratories, on the frontiers of civilization—men and women by the thousand who are stung by the bare sight of pain, and to whom the cry of suffering is like the trumpet call to the soldier, summoning them to do battle for humanity against the deadly powers of disease. It is a fierce and holy joy to them to grapple with those deadly enemies of men; lost or won, it is a fight to the finish for human life and health.

¶ Of Clara Barton, the 'Florence Nightingale' of the American Civil War, it is recorded that the Central Relief Committee formed after the great tidal wave and tornado of terrific force that destroyed Galveston, the capital of the State of Texas, sent her the following resolution:

'Resolved, That we especially thank and render homage to the woman who is the life and spirit of the Red Cross—who is the embodiment of the saving principle of laying down one's life for one's friend, whose friend is the friendless and whose charge is the stricken, who should be exalted above Queens, and whose achievements are greater than the conquests of nations or the inventions of genius, and who is justly crowned in the evening of her life with the love and admiration of all humanity—Miss Clara Barton.'[1]

¶ Dr. Kelman says of Dr. Joseph Bell, a famous Edinburgh surgeon, 'The impression he has left with me is that of a very heroic man—one of the great men. He reminded me often of that older hero who—

> For man's sake
> Laboured and meant to labour his life long, who held his life
> Out on his hand for any man to take.'

It is recorded of him that 'a little child, suffering from that terrible scourge [diphtheria] was brought to the Royal Infirmary, and operated upon by Professor Syme; but the "poisonous stuff" had accumulated so much, and the air passages were so clogged, that there seemed no method of relieving the patient except by suction. Instruments for that purpose had not then been invented, and Joe Bell did the service required—sucked the poison from the child's throat, risking his life for that of a poor man's child. He took diphtheria very badly. It was scarcely possible to escape, and for a long time the young surgeon suffered from the deadly effects of that action. Indeed, he told me that his voice never wholly recovered. It is so common for medical men to do noble deeds that the public scarcely comment upon exceptionally brave professional heroism. Yet titles and V.C.'s are given for less things than that which set young Bell in a foremost place among our nation's best.'[1]

[1] P. H. Epler, *The Life of Clara Barton*, 324

The Training of Disciples.

Luke v. 1.—'He stood by the lake of Gennesaret.'

THE Sea of Galilee (or Lake of Gennesaret, as it is here called) and the hollowed hills that surround its shores have changed their climate since the Saviour made them His favourite haunt. To live there now, from the month of May till late in the year, is like living in a furnace, and those who feel the oppressive blaze cannot believe that the place was once the centre of a rich human activity. In the time of Christ, however, the population was large and varied; hundreds of fishing-boats were sprinkled over the lake; and in the villages and cities along its shores crowds of men toiled in the fisheries, in commerce, and in the court at Tiberias.

The cause of the change of climate is the destruction of the abundant vegetation that once clothed the shores of this inland sea. It is often a day's journey now to find shade for the encamp-

[1] *Joseph Bell, M.D., F.R.C.S.*, 27, 33.

ment; but then, we are told by the Jewish historian, plants and flowers, equally from cold and from torrid lands, brought forth plenteously all through the year leaves, fruits, and blossoms. He calls the climate temperate; it probably resembled that of the Lake of Como.

Waves of war have swept over it since then, and the ruin of its vegetation, in altering the climate, has banished the population. The lake, as well as the land, is deserted. Perhaps at times a single barque is seen, the solitary representative of the fishing-fleets and pleasure-boats of old. But the waters and the shore are lovely still. The sea, blue and translucent, breaks on a white beach of shells, or flows into creeks where the grass and flowers dip into the water, and the tamarisk stands among oleanders in the golden haze. The lake is covered with flocks of water-fowl, and is still to-day the favoured haunt of fish. Low grassy hills look down upon its surface, and far to the north the snowy peak of Hermon cuts the sapphire sky.

Here, then, Jesus found and called His chief Apostles. Three stages, at least, in the call of the principal Apostles are now generally recognized.

The first occurred during the Judæan ministry, when John, Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael were attracted to the Lord, and came forward as His disciples (John i. 35-51). At this period, however, they seem to have been only occasional followers, and, when not actually with Jesus, to have continued to carry on their former occupations.

The second stage was reached, at least in the case of the fisher-group of disciples, when by the shores of the Sea of Galilee Jesus summoned Peter and Andrew, James and John, to come after Him, that He might make them fishers of men: and they left all and followed Him (Matt. iv. 18-22; Mark i. 16-20). Their whole lives and interests were thenceforth devoted to Christ's service, and gradually they were prepared for the highest call of all, the call to Apostleship.

That came when, out of the great mass of His disciples, Jesus chose the Twelve, 'that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have authority to cast out devils' (Mark iii. 14, 15). The foundations of the new Church were then securely laid, and in these humble men the Saviour provided the means for the carrying on of His work, after He Himself had left the world.

It is with the second of these three stages that the narrative before us is evidently most closely connected, but it is not easy to determine its precise relation to it. Certain differences between the accounts of Matthew and Mark on the one hand, and of Luke on the other—notably the entire omission by the former Evangelists of any reference to the miraculous draught of fishes—have led many scholars to imagine that Luke is, in reality, describing another and supplementary call addressed specially to Peter, but which embraced also some of his companions. And, in itself, there is nothing improbable in this. At the same time, the general similarity between the narratives, including the recurrence of certain marked words and phrases, makes it more probable that the occasions to which they refer are to be identified, and that, while Matthew and Mark describe the actual circumstances of the call itself in fuller detail, Luke includes more particularly certain incidents leading up to it.

If so, the course of events would seem to have been somewhat as follows. After being rejected at Nazareth, Jesus directed His steps towards Capernaum, preaching in various towns and villages on the way. In consequence, His fame as a preacher rapidly spread, and when He arrived at the populous district immediately surrounding the Lake of Gennesaret, He at once found Himself the centre of an eager and enthusiastic crowd. So closely indeed did they press upon Him on one occasion as He stood by the shores of the Lake, that He had to take refuge in one of the boats which the fishermen had left while they washed their nets. Entering into this He bade its owner Simon push off a little from the land, and then, using the prow as a pulpit, He sat down and taught the multitudes gathered on the shore.

Now observe the training through which Jesus puts these men.

1. First of all, He asked for a boat. It was not the boat so much as the boatman that He wanted. It is the holy art of a Christian worker to ask a favour of a man. We have often seen that the best way to arrest and attract to our side some indifferent one is to get him to do a

service. Jesus asked a service that was easily rendered. He asked for a boat, and the boat was not in use.

When He had got this pulpit and used it, He wanted to repay Peter. No doubt Peter had been sitting self-complacent, thinking, 'I never imagined that I could serve Christ by lending Him my boat. I thought I could do it only by sacrificing everything—leaving my house and family, and going forth to wander up and down with Him.' But now, when he had got a chance of service, no doubt he was beginning to feel very comfortable. It was so nice to hold the boat near the shore, and be in the boat with Jesus, and listen. But he is going to have his complacency taken out of him. 'Launch out!' Peter was probably thinking, 'I should be so willing to give Him my boat always, if this is all. If He would be willing to accept this as my reasonable service, what would I not do?' Well, Peter, here is your opportunity—'Launch out.' Ah, that means a tax that was not expected. For Peter had had a wearisome night before, toiling and getting nothing, and he had the same prospect in the night that was coming. Besides, Jesus was evidently not going to take his service as he intended it. He was proud to do this thing. It was an obligation that Christ asked, and he gave it in that spirit, and gave it gladly. But Christ will be debtor to no one, 'Launch out, . . . and let down your nets for a draught.'

2. And here comes the second stage in the training: 'Launch out.' Why, all the conditions were against the enterprise at the time. 'Master,' says Peter, 'we have toiled all night and got nothing; and if we were unsuccessful in the fishing during the time when the work is sure to be successful, what can we look for now?' Besides Peter was thinking of the people on the shore. His credit as a fisherman was at stake, and he thought, 'Well, they might be saying, "What fools these new-fangled religious people are, going out to fish at a time when people would never dream of getting fish!"' And so Peter puts in this demur: 'We have toiled all the night and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.' 'At thy word!' Yes; Peter surrendered his will—not entirely, but as much of his will as went with his heart, although he got back as much of it as clung to his reason. For see how it comes out. Jesus said, 'Let down your *nets*'; but Peter only let down a net, as much as if he were saying, 'I know it is no use—I know what the result will be; but in order to gratify and honour your command, I will let down the net.' Peter had to learn absolute submission to the Divine guidance, and absolute reliance upon the Divine word. He was to get a new meaning read into his own statement: 'Nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.' That is where the strength of the Christian worker comes in. It may be he has had failure in a previous attempt. Nevertheless, he has balancing on the one side his own reason and experience, and what the world may think; he has Christ's word and command on the other, which turns the balance and launches him out into the deep, even though he may have no knowledge of how the work is to prosper. So Peter has been taught to submit; that is to say, first the self-complacency is taken out of him, and then the self-confidence.

3. But now see what happens; instantly the net enclosed such a multitude of fishes that it broke. You can imagine Peter's feelings when the net was put down. You remember the feeling was, 'Well, it is useless, but to please Him and to honour Him I'll do it.' But immediately that the skilled hand felt the net tightening, he would think, 'What a fool I have been!' Yet he would not have time to think about his folly, for the instinct of the fisherman would at once get to the task, and Peter would feel, 'I have been mistaken in judgment; but if I am good for anything it is for this.' And he was certain that he was able to cope now with the work of the fisherman; but he had to find his insufficiency. First, the net broke. It was a lesson that Peter needed to learn! The net—the broken net: do not we see it in his after-life? Peter could have been made the Apostle of the Gentiles; but somehow Peter's hand was not strong enough, and another had to be got. The net broke, and it needed another's help, and then he had to call to his partners. But that was not all. Even when he had got the help, and they were getting the fish in, the boat began to sink. Oh, that

sense of insufficiency and helplessness! And see where it came in—just at the point where he deemed himself strongest. If the Lord had asked him to preach a sermon, Peter would at once have acknowledged his utter helplessness. But here he had to do just what he thought he could do best—fish, get his fish into his boat—and he was proved so helpless. That is the next lesson that the Christian worker has to learn. He is weakest just where he seems to think he is strongest. And where he feels his weakness is just Christ's strength.

4. But see the next lesson. Complacency, self-sufficiency, have been taken out of him; now he needs to get the conceit taken out of him—that is to say, he has been taken out of himself so far, but now he will have to be taken out of self altogether. How is it done? Notice these words: 'He beckoned to them.' This is one of those touches that testify to the genuineness of the narrative. If it had been an ordinary cast, Peter, in his emergency, would have cried to them. But there was a nameless awe stealing over him at this unexpected—miracle was the right word for it. This strange Guest was with him in the boat, and awe was beginning to take possession of him. He felt that it was a time for silence; he could but beckon. And then the sinking boat! It was when the boat began to sink, when the extremity was beginning to press heaviest, that Peter knew that Jesus must guide, and Jesus must do all. But now, seeing who this Guest in his boat is, he kneels down, sinks at Jesus' feet, and cries, 'Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord!'

In strenuous hope I wrought,
And hope seem'd still betray'd;
Lastly I said,
'I have labour'd through the Night, nor yet
Have taken aught;
But at Thy word I will again cast forth the net!'
And, lo, I caught
(Oh, quite unlike and quite beyond my thought,)
Not the quick, shining harvest of the Sea,
For food, my wish,
But Thee![1]

[1] Coventry Patmore.

Discovery.

Luke v. 4.—'Launch out into the deep.'

THREE things followed when Simon Peter launched out into the deep, and we may expect the same if we follow his example. There was a fresh revelation of Jesus Christ, a fresh quickening of conscience, and a fresh consecration of his whole life.

1. Peter made a great discovery that morning. Though he had accepted his brother Andrew's testimony that Jesus was the Messiah, the wondrous power of the personality of Jesus Christ had not fully laid hold upon him. We learn truths and know them in our heads long before we experience the full power of them in our hearts. But that morning the sympathy and power of Jesus Christ laid hold upon Peter's heart. Peter had *a fresh revelation of Jesus Christ.* 'To think,' he would say to himself as he watched the net breaking beneath the burden of the many fish, 'to think that the Master, while pouring out His heart in such wonderful teaching to the multitude, should have noticed poor Peter's empty nets and have arranged this beautiful supply.' 'Yea, what a prophet is this, seeing into the hidden depths of the sea and discovering this shoal that none of us fishermen saw a trace of.' Jesus Christ had met Simon Peter on the plane of his secular life, sympathizing with him over his empty nets and putting forth His Divine knowledge and power to fill them. Has Jesus Christ ever filled your empty nets? He knows all the empty parts in your life. Launch out first and He will surely fill them. It is worth while having the nets empty that you may discover how readily Christ will fill them. Once you have tested the exquisite sweetness of having your empty nets filled by Jesus you will never look elsewhere.

2. But with this discovery there came *a fresh quickening of conscience.* Peter felt that the very same penetrating gaze which detected the shoal of fish was reading the deepest secrets of his heart. As a well-taught Jew, he had always acknowledged himself a sinner, but now he felt the exceeding sinfulness of his sin as he realized how unnecessary and how vile it seemed in the

eyes of Jesus Christ. His conscience had been sleeping. It was startled into fresh life and activity by this discovery of the sympathy and power of Jesus Christ.

This is always the result of launching out into the deep. So some souls are brought to Christ only through trouble. They live superficial lives, quite content with the pleasures of the world, not abandoned to evil, but feeling no need of a Saviour. At last by stress of wind and tempest they are driven into the deep. All at once their earthly hopes seem blighted. The friend they trusted has played them false. The money they made a god of has melted away. The glow of vigorous health has given place to the trembling of weakness and disease. God is thrusting them out into the deep that He may make known to them His goodness and power. And when His presence is thus manifested their sleeping consciences awake.

¶ So was it with young Henry Martyn when he heard of his father's death. The affectionate boy, too young to remember his mother's death, found his first great sorrow staring at him, and he quite alone, in what seemed only a greater isolation because, with the chimes of Trinity and St. Clement's, there floated in the sound of eager talk on the staircase, and shouting and sudden spurts of laughter from the court below.

Alone, Martyn found himself shivering before realities he would gladly have forgotten.

'I began to consider seriously that invisible world to which he had gone and to which I must one day go. As I had no taste at this time for my usual studies, I took up my Bible [how often had the pious little Sally in Cornwall prayed for that moment!] thinking that the consideration of religion was rather suitable to this solemn time.'

But tormented as he was by memories of his own 'consummate selfishness' at home, as set against his father's unfailing 'patience and mildness,' Martyn found no peace of forgetfulness through his effort at Bible reading. He was turning for escape to other books when Kempthorne came in. That steady, comfortable friend, the link between Cambridge and the world of home, now advised Martyn 'to make this time an occasion for serious reflection.' . . .

It was not Martyn's habit at that time to pray, but prayer seemed a suitable exercise for one urged by Kempthorpe to 'serious reflection.' He knelt and 'began to pray from a precomposed form, in which I thanked God in general for having sent Christ into the world.' It was his first stumbling footstep in the way of prayer, wherein his spirit was to know such hard-won and such exquisite delight.[1]

3. But this will not drive you from Jesus. Nay, you will feel constrained to abide in His presence who alone knows the depth of your trouble and loves you in spite of it. It will lead to *a fresh consecration of life.* Peter felt that only one occupation remained open to him. The most successful fishing in the Sea of Galilee seemed poor sport and mean occupation for one who had thus seen into the depths of the knowledge of Christ and of his own soul. He was ready enough now to accept the Master's commission, and when they had brought their boat to land they forsook all and followed Jesus. His launching out upon the Sea of Galilee led to a launching out into a new and blessed life of service and ministry as the chosen companion and apostle of Jesus Christ.

Thou comest, and swift, through the doorways of dulness,
Come joy and vitality, glory and grace!
Who loves Thee will serve Thee with life in its fulness,
Or die at his post with Thy joy on his face.[2]

The Shallows and the Deeps.

Luke v. 4.—'Launch out into the deep.'

ONE of the most striking aspects of the teaching of Jesus is His use of the simplest incident to teach the greatest lessons, and His conversion of each fact of nature or life into a parable of His work. Here, for example, He comes upon these fishermen, who had already pledged themselves to be His disciples, and finds them washing their empty nets upon the beach and complaining that they had brought no fish to land. So it is, Jesus seems to say to Himself, with their half-hearted discipleship. They had put out a little way into that great adventure, but had soon retreated to the shore with empty nets and empty hearts. Then Jesus lifts His eyes to the great lake which

[1] C. E. Padwick, *Henry Martyn*, 56.
[2] A. Matheson, *Maytime Songs*, 17.

spreads before them in breadth and mystery, and it becomes to Him the picture of the mission to which He had called these timid fishers. 'Put out more boldly,' He says to them, 'into deeper waters, and make a braver venture of your faith. How can you fill your nets when you fish in the shallows? Why dabble in the shoals of life when you are called to the great sea? Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. You have been catching minnows when I have called you to catch men.'

1. Men are too content with living in the shallows of life. They paddle like little children on the beach, when they should be beyond the horizon with all sails set. They sip, where they should drink deep draughts. And so thousands die before they have really tasted of the new wine of God, which is mixed in the vintage of His love for all His children.

(1) We are too content to move in the shallows of *thought*. Few of us read any books that make a real tax on our faculties. We expect our authors nowadays to bring our mental food to the table, not in plain wholesome dishes, as did our forefathers, with 'good digestion waiting on good appetite,' but in the form of highly-spiced condiments. Most of us must now have even our theology interwoven into the texture of a story before we will touch it, which accounts for the quality of most of it; for how can untrained and often unsympathetic novelists deal with the deep things of God? It accounts also for its weak hold on us, for it cannot be grasped in a mood of mere indolence and frivolity. Few, indeed, make it a rule even once a year to wrestle with a really great subject, and commune, as in duty bound, with one of the master-minds of the ages, refusing to let him go till he has blessed them with the best that is in him. How few in our average congregations encourage their ministers to deal with the mighty truths of the gospel, the profound mysteries of the Faith till these lay hold of the roots of their being. This was not how our forefathers were built up in the most holy Faith of the Son of God, or how they developed those spiritual thews that turned the world upside down, or fed the heroism that went smiling into battle and martyrdom. 'Milk' for babes, but 'strong meat' for men!

¶ We are invited by the spirit of the times to dwell on the surface. To dig deep is to go against the age. To think about foundations is to think away from the importunity of custom. The young man of to-day must take care, or he will descend towards narrowness and poverty of character. All skaters are not navigators. It is one thing to skim over a frozen pond, and another to sail upon the troubled deep. A bottle is not full because it bears a label. The chaffering sparrow has as many wings as the eagle, but he cannot dip them in the same burning glory. A swaling candle is not to be mistaken for a comet. Men do not find in mushrooms the beams of which ships are built. We must distinguish between things that differ.[1]

(2) Is not our *social intercourse* liable to the some charge of shallowness? When men and women meet, what do they talk about? Are the trivialities in which most of us indulge, the nothings of ordinary conversation, the petty details of the weather and of business, the surface drift of passing events—are *these* the topics that immortal beings are to be limited to in the hours of their communion and fellowship? When sometimes we break through these poor conventions, and get to heart-grips with one another, how the barriers of personality are rent, and soul looks on soul. There is time for banter and fun and the play of the lightest fancies in thought and conversation. But there are deep pools in every bubbling brook; and there are deeps of confidence, and foundations of pure, sweet, serious thought that should have their place in all our friendships, and even our acquaintanceships. We should meet, sometimes at least, like the children of the Great King.

(3) Is not our *religion*, too, in danger of shallowness? Are we not in peril of making this richest experience a commonplace—a mean, wooden, mechanical department of life, instead of the air in which the soul draws breath, the illimitable sea on which it voyages to a better land? How uninteresting most men's religion appears from the outside! How unattractive to onlookers! That, too, is because we do not put its deeper truths to the test. We skirt the shore, and live among the breakers, and handle our little cock-boats as though in perpetual fear of ship-

[1] J. Parker, *Detached Links*, 175.

wreck. We are afraid of taking to the deep water. The world is suffering in religion from amateur Christians—half-consecrated, half-doubtful, full of double-mindedness in all their ways. Here and there we find souls who have made the 'great venture,' who have put themselves wholly under the 'power of an endless life,' and who are, therefore, no longer babes, but full-grown men and women in Christ Jesus; and when the worst and most worldly see them, they bend the knee in involuntary homage.

¶ Our conception of the power of music is not limited to any expression of it we have ever heard. The sonatas of Beethoven, the symphonies of Hadyn, the choruses of Handel, are only efforts to comprehend and express the infinite beauties and powers of music; they do not exhaust its possibilities. So of religion. The highest type of Christian, and the most comprehensive creed, are only like pebbles on the seashore; they do not exhaust, but only indicate, the vast possibilities of the religious life. Religion is as deep as the nature of God, and that is infinite. It is the foolish child who imagines the ocean is as shallow as the little creeks and pools where he is wading knee-deep; the experienced sailor has a different idea. It is not a bad test of a man's knowledge of science and letters to observe his spirit and temper in relation to them. The dabbler in science is often loud and conceited; the deep student is modest. To judge from some persons' spirit and temper in relation to religion, either religion or their conception of it is shallow. The deep student, he who has plunged into the depths of knowledge, has the seriousness and humbleness which are born of thought and experience. The Breton fisherman prays, 'Lord have mercy upon me; my boat is so little and Thy sea is so great.' This is the spirit of all who 'launch out into the deep.' [1]

2. Amid the manifold awakenings of the present day, when man is realizing for the first time his sovereignty over Nature, and entering into his inheritance of knowledge and power, is there not a new call for us to 'launch out into the deep?' Is it not time for us courageously to set about applying the gospel to the sores and sorrows of the age without the misgivings that hold our hand from treating them firmly and honestly? Is it not time to let ourselves loose from the moorings of ease in which we are mostly swinging, and to accept whatever hardships and self-sacrifice may be necessary in order to make the world better, and cleanse this defiled planet of its sin? For, till we thus conquer our fears, and bid farewell to our cowardice, it will be in vain that we shall add one department of knowledge to another, and plumb the secrets of existence. Of what use will the sovereignty of Nature be to a creature who has not yet won the sovereignty over his own heart? Therefore the call comes to us all, 'Launch out into the deep! Leave the shoreline; venture into the open.'

(1) 'Launch out into the deep' of *Truth*. It is a time of storm and stress. The skies of thought are clouded. The winds are abroad. The lights of faith are dim. In such times it is the shore that is dangerous; safety lies in the open sea. Therefore we must cut our cables from the anchorage that for centuries has made religious thought unprogressive and narrow, and, filled with faith in the living Christ, we must follow His call. Already on the far horizon the light is breaking, and the coast-lines of a loftier intellectual creed are forming out of the morning mists. 'Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me.'

(2) 'Launch out into the deep' of *Love*. Put the Divine Love to the test. Let your heart open itself to the message of the Cross. Let that message deepen your sense of sin, and your hatred of it. Learn beneath the shadow of the awful tree, and its mystery of pain, and its unplumbed depths of sorrow and woe, the infinite cost of redemption to God and its priceless value to us. Make this the very pivot and centre of your thought and conduct—the truth that God loves, forgives, forgets, and that in and through the Cross of His dear Son the sin and shame, the failure and wrong of those who trust in Him are all blotted out. In that conviction lie the seeds of all holy living, all sweet and blessed comfort, all grace and fruitfulness of character.

(3) 'Launch out into the deep' of *Life*—the life of the Spirit. The first law of life is self-preservation—there we are one with the animal. The second law of life is self-realization—there we are merely human. The third and highest law

[1] A. H. Walker, *Thinking about It*, 182.

of life is self-surrender—there we link ourselves with the Divine Man who was obedient unto death, that He might bring many sons to glory. 'He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.' We begin to live only when we cease to live for ourselves. Those who hope for heaven as a mere refuge, whether from the sorrows of this life or from the penalties of sin, do not know where heaven is. Those who long for it as a means of happiness have seen only its outskirts. Those only will enter its holy of holies and see God face to face who give themselves, body and soul, into the hands of the Eternal, to be made the instruments of His will, and to be moulded by His grace into the image of His dear Son.

'Launch out into the deep!'
O Lord, o'er sea and land,
We hear the splendour of Thy voice,
In tones of high command—
'Not in these shallow bays
With idle oars delay,
But let them sweep into the deep,
At dawning of the day.'

Into the deep of Truth,
That flows from pole to pole,
We plunge, as o'er its shadowed waves
We hear Thy thunders roll—
The Truth that, surging, breaks
On error's rock-bound beach,
And bears us far, 'neath sun and star,
Till we Thy presence reach.

Into the deep of Love—
Thy Love, so full and free!—
Beneath whose gleaming waters wide
We lose our misery;
The love that softly flows
O'er many a sunken shame,
And to the dim horizon's rim
Is vocal with Thy name.

Into the deep of Life—
Glad immortality!—
Whose bright waves fold, on sands of gold,
Beneath a cloudless sky.
O Truth, O Love, O Life,
Why darkly here delay?
Our oars we sweep into the deep,
At dawning of the day.

The Unknown Deeps.

Luke v. 4.—'Launch out into the deep.'

THE historian of Alexander the Great sums up his hero in a striking phrase: 'Even if he had conquered the whole of India, still he would have been reaching out beyond into the unknown.' In the great minds and spirits of our race we see but more clearly what is instinctive with us all—the passion to reach out into the unknown; the sense that there is more beyond; that we were born for greater things than we have realized or than we know; that out beyond us lies more and more of God's wonderful and unsearchable world. This strange world in which we are living grows more strange and more wonderful as we know it better. We are 'moving about,' as Wordsworth said, 'in worlds not realized,' and there is the instinct to reach out, to make more and more of our environment our own.

When we look at the story of mankind we see that great forward movements have always come when men have trusted themselves to the unknown, launched out into the deep, explored it, and let down their nets for a draught. All the pioneers, all who have led us, all who have taught us, have been of this build. Think of the awful launching into the deep that Luther made, trusting to God, and getting outside all the known world of religious experience in the faith of what he found Jesus Christ doing there and then for his soul. A new world opens up when we trust God and sail out past the old landmarks.

There is a kind of safe inshore thinking, a spiritual living from hand to mouth—a matter of small profits, of safety, of spiritual comfort—a living in the obvious gifts of God, in the obvious work of Christ, taking the first things He gives and being content with them. Men form for themselves a shallow view of Jesus Christ. Is it a true view, a view that works out in spiritual power, a complete view? No. It is not the whole great Christ. It is safe; it is convenient; it is helpful; but is it all that He has to give? Is it enough for the spirit that He touches and has set on fire? There is a shallowness about our thinking, a shallowness about our orthodoxy, a shallowness about our heterodoxy. We are not launching out into the deep. We are content with swift thinking and easy views; and the men

and women round about us are not content with either the one or the other. Surely the Church of God is called to be the great explorer of God. That exploration is one of the great Christian passions and one of the great Christian duties. Can you think of Jesus Christ? Can you see Him? Can you catch an authentic tone of His voice and not feel the challenge to launch out, to go further, to explore? That passion shines through all His teaching; you find it in all His great sermons—that sense of the Great Beyond.

1. First of all, launch out into the deep *where our Lord Jesus Christ is concerned.* One great text that is an everlasting stand-by to the Church was written to the Hebrews. 'Jesus Christ, yesterday and to-day the same, and for ever.' But if Paul had thought of it, he would have written: 'Jesus Christ, yesterday and to-day different, and for ever.' It is written all over his Epistles in one form or another. Is He—is the Christ in whom you and I believe to-day—the same Christ in whom we believed a year ago? Why, yes; but He ought not to be! He ought not to be—for look at your friends round about you; are they the same friends with whom you walked and spoke a year ago? Oh, no! Such and such a thing has happened—joy, bereavement—and you have gained a deeper knowledge of one another; the man is altogether different now from what he was a year ago. Like; but oh, how different! And so it ought to be with Jesus Christ. If the view that we had of Him when we first knew Him is the view we have to-day, we have not gone very far with Him. We have to 'launch out into the deep'; we have to know Him better year by year; to explore Him; to capture His personality.

In his life of Macaulay, Sir George Trevelyan tells us how he and his sisters discovered their uncle. He was the kindest, delightfullest, and jolliest of men; he had the best stories for the children; he made up the best poetry for them; invented the best riddles for them; he was the children's man. And then, when they grew up, they found that they had been playing and romping and guessing riddles with a man who stood in a place by himself, a man whom they had never known. They knew him as their uncle; but they did not know the great man that England knew.

¶ Compare with this what Mrs. Drew says of Mr. Gladstone. 'With us it was a case of a prophet not without honour save in his own country. His sun had already risen and we knew it not. The fact of his being a Cabinet Minister, foremost among his colleagues, never impressed itself upon us as any special honour or glory. It never crossed my mind that other people's fathers were not just the same. All my friends, I thought, had the same sort of father. It was a cause of wonder to me when those who came to the house, especially our cousins, treated him with awe and reverence, listening to every word that fell from his lips. Indeed, we treated him with scant respect; argued across him while he was talking; even contradicted him. Both our parents were extraordinarily simple, and never seemed conscious of occupying an exceptional plane. Whatever we learnt on this score came to us from outward sources, *e.g.,* the brothers at school. . . . I recall the very spot on the steps of the porch by which the house is entered, where it was suddenly borne in upon me how my eyes were holden. I had been out walking with a girl friend, Margaret Leicester Warren—a hereditary friendship, her parents being great friends of Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone. She paused. "You know," she said, "I think Mr. Gladstone much the greatest man in the world, and I am not sure that he is not the greatest man who ever lived."

It was an intense moment of revelation to a daughter, and not very long after the impression received its seal in a memorable conversation with Lord Acton.'[1]

2. 'Launch out into the deep' *where sin is concerned.* Are you thinking about sin? What is sin? Is it something that is natural? Is it an experience that is valuable? That idea is thrown out. Is it something that is natural, but regrettable? Or is it—speaking the language of the common man and not theology—is it just hell? Are we thinking about sin in any real kind of way? Do we know what it means? Do we realize how much it matters? Do we wonder whether it matters? Is our religion one that deals with sin easily? Deals easily with sin, and He was crucified on account of it! What does it mean? It gives us a glimpse of the greatness of the question and

[1] Mary Drew, *Catherine Gladstone*, 262.

its profundity when we see Christ crucified because of it. Does it matter? You say, people will not listen to you when you talk about sin. Won't they? They will not listen to your terminology, but they know the thing all right. As Cromwell said, 'Speak things.' What is *your* philosophy of sin? And, because it bears on all that we are thinking about, what is your philosophy of redemption?

What do we mean by redemption? What is forgiveness? Luther had a classical education, and he adopts a phrase from Horace: 'Forgiveness is a knot that calls for God's aid to unravel.' Quite apart from the problem of patching up, and the more awful problem of renewing, a wasted life, the whole question of sin, redemption and forgiveness, as you come to think it out, is a difficult one. Are we thinking about these things? Do you remember what Heine, the flippant Heine, on the bed in which he died, said?—'Yes; God will forgive me. It is His *métier*'! It is more difficult than that.

¶ Excuse it as we may, apologize for our own sinfulness as we will, let us remember that the black, dire fact is here—an opiate in the will, a frenzy in the imagination, a madness in the brain, a poison in the heart. Culture cannot extract it; art cannot conceal it; indifference cannot forgo it; foolish cults cannot clear it away.[1]

Encouragement.

Luke v. 5.—'Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing.'

THE disciples had been fishing for a night and had failed. Now, perhaps we are not prepared to take that lowly ground and say that at our last bout of work we failed, but it is safer on the whole to take that ground and to say hard things about ourselves. We had better, if we are going to get any blessing, take the lowly ground.

1. Then, notice first that Christ sent them back into exactly the same waters as those in which they had failed. They were the same men, indeed not quite the men they were, for it was later in the day and they were tired and depressed as a result of having tried and failed. To the same place where they had failed our Lord bade them return: that is the irony of the gospel, the iron hand beneath the silken glove. Christ sends us back precisely to the place where we have failed. He begins the process of our recovery, the process of enduing us with new power, where formerly we have failed. It might have been kinder to the disciples, and would have preserved their *amour propre,* if our Lord had sent them into some other kind of water. Sometimes we wish that God would send us to some other kind of work. We think we could serve God better if we were anywhere almost but just where we are, thereby impugning God's government of our lives.

2. The second point is that He sent them back more deeply into the business: 'Launch out into the deep.' The disciples were fishermen who knew their business, but they had been fishing in more shallow waters than those our Lord was commanding them to go into. Let us go more deeply into the whole business of this work of ours. Some of us have just enough Christianity to make us unhappy; we are conscious of the *yoke* of Christ rather than of His *power;* we have not let go; we are as those who, when learning to swim, try to keep one toe on the ground. There comes a glorious moment when one lifts one's foot, and behold! the whole universe conspires to make you a swimmer. You know the difference between giving yourselves to a thing and not giving yourselves to it; between having your heart in it and having your heart elsewhere. What makes Christian giving an irksome thing is not the giving, but the thinking about it. What makes Christian work dreary is not the strength put into it, but the strength we do not put into it. What we keep back from God makes us poorer. Let us go more deeply into things.

¶ There are the great *deeps in service* waiting our coming. Round about every church and around every Christian association of men and women is a fringe of deep, a fringe of those practically untouched by the warm message of Jesus. In the heart and on the edges of every village and town and city unfathomed deeps lie; deeps in a man's own state, deeps in our land, great untouched deeps in the world.

Wherever there is a man who has not felt the

[1] Frederick F. Shannon.

warm side of the story of Jesus' dying there is a deep. Wherever a group of such can be found is a deep increased in depth by the number in the group. Wherever the great crowds are gathered together to whom no word at all has come, either by personal touch or printed page or any other wise, there is the deepest deep. With a glow in His eyes as He speaks the word, and the tenderness and softness of deep emotion, and the earnestness of one who has Himself been in the deep, Jesus says anew to us to-day, 'Out into the *deep*.'

We are to be ambitious in service. Jesus was ambitious. He reached out for all, those nearest, those farthest. He talked of all nations, of a world. His follower must have a long reach to keep up.[1]

3. In the third place, and above all, our Lord went back with the disciples Himself. The difference is tremendous between doing Christ's work without Christ's society and doing it with His society. Oh, the dreariness, the fatigue of the work, the unhappiness, the failures, the private shame and self-contempt, when we discover that we are professional servants of Christ, people who are in His service because we were in it once before, and the public expects us to go on. What a difference between that and doing the work for Christ's sake, in the society of Jesus.

¶ There was a man at college with me—he is now a minister of the Church—and many years afterwards he told me this incident: Not robust physically, he suffered particularly from an affection of the heart which, when he was about nineteen or twenty, was likely to take him off. He was a brave man, and he set himself, as far as he could, to overcome the physical misgiving which this heart trouble brought to him. But he had an obsession; there was a point in the quadrangle of the University which he could not bring himself to pass. To us such a thing would be a trifle, but it was no trifle to him. Day by day he drew near to the point, setting himself to face the difficulty, but as often as he did so it was as if his heart would stop for ever, until he had to lean for support against the wall. At last he did what he ought to have done long before: he spoke to his best friend about it in secret, and told him he knew quite well that until he could pass that difficult point he could not go outside and face the task of a man. And his brother said to him, 'Give me your hand,' and the two of them went past that dizzy point. Then he said, 'Let us go past it again and again,' until it became no point at all in the man's moral landscape. Christ sends you and me back, but we are not going alone; we are not going gloomily, but happily, for we are conscious of Christ's presence with us as we go.[1]

[1] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Service*, 143.

Success and Failure.

Luke v. 5.—'We have toiled all the night and have taken nothing.'

THE miracles of our Lord are parables too. Not that we are to lose the fact in the doctrine. Not that we are to say, as some have presumed to say, that the allegorical is either the whole or the primary sense of a gospel miracle; each miracle is a fact first, and out of the fact flows the doctrine. It is because the record is literally true that it is also spiritually instructive. It is because the narrative is true to the fact that it is true to life, true to nature, and true to the heart. It is not by deceptions and it is not through illusions that the God of truth leads His creatures into the light of life.

Jesus taught by actions; He was Himself the Word, the expression of the mind of God; every action was itself a word. His miracles had a voice, and His life was as it were a magnificent monument sculptured over with hieroglyphics which can be understood and interpreted only by him who has the key, which is the spirit of God.

Our Redeemer here, by a significant act, proclaims to Peter many things on which his heart may feed—the lovingkindness of God, the powerlessness of man, and the success of the gospel. But let the commentator come and force upon it a literal meaning, and its true life is gone; the poetry of it has fled—for all the highest truth is poetry. The life of Christ is the noblest poetry, the actions and words of Christ are poetry; with that the mind labours, without power of expressing it in adequate words, and therefore must find figures; just as God is obliged to speak to us

[1] J. A. Hutton.

by the symbols of this universe, and just as the universe tells us of the beauty of God. But try to express in words the beauty, majesty, and love, and it will all fail. So in the words of Christ there is something for ever beautiful, but it is a beauty too refined for the mind to grasp; therefore these acts of Christ remain for ever full of meaning which can never be exhausted; these words it is our privilege to find, each time we look into them, as fresh and new as if they had never been interpreted before.

1. 'We have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing.' That was not the first vain night by a good many that the disciples had spent on the Sea of Galilee. Remember, these men were no novices. They knew their business. They had known the Galilean Sea from their boyhood—all its moods and tempers, its dangers and its possibilities. The story of their bread-winning life had been told upon its waters. They were experts, and their boat was empty. They had worked hard and worked wisely, and the sea had beaten them. In spite of the instincts and love of a lifetime on its waters, it can send a man ashore with an empty boat.

And on the greater sea where you and I do our work the same story is ever being told. It is a difficult story to understand. It is beyond us all. The failure of the foolish, the incompetent and the lazy is a foregone conclusion. But how often do we see the wise, strong, earnest, capable souls coming from their toils with nothing to show! It is a piece of pitifully false reasoning that would account for the seeming vanity of effort by suggesting that the man who made it was incompetent. Some of the best-equipped lives the world has known have seemed to be associated with failure rather than with success. For all of us periods of unfruitful and unrewarded toil are only too familiar. For the fishermen in the bay, for the toiler among human souls, life holds something not fortuitous, but incalculable. There is always the unknown quantity, always the equation we cannot solve. It would seem that it is not the will of God that we should in our toil for Him feel ourselves masters of the situation. It must be enough to know that He is Master of it. No Christian worker can say, 'My work is there. I hold every thread of it in my hands.'

And that is the repose of life: to order your life according to the word of God.

Cast all your cares on God—that anchor holds—
Is He not yonder in these uttermost
Parts of the morning? If I flee to these
Can I go from Him? And the sea is His,
The sea is His, He made it.

2. Again, success and failure are deep and inward things. No surface judgment ever truly appraises them. The world reads failure in an empty boat. God reads failure in an empty heart. 'We have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing.' Well, what of that? That is no tragedy if you can say, 'We have toiled all night, and have lost nothing.' This is where you begin to see right into the heart of the worker's failure—not the thing he did not win, but the thing he did lose.

Hopelessness, indifference, weak despondency, foolish desperation, cynical unbelief—these are the things that go to make real failure. It is not our ignorance and clumsiness that baffle the Almighty—it is our despair. When Peter put out into the night on the former of the two ventures with which we are concerned, he had his skill, his experience, his calculations. He had noted the hour and read the sky—and he came back with an empty boat. The next time he put forth all these things had become secondary matters. The simple, sufficient inspiration of his second venture was the word of his Master. Jesus had met and talked with Simon, and the seeds of a splendid faith were already germinating in the disciple's heart. 'Nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.' I am afraid we do not always get so far as that. 'We have toiled all night, and have taken nothing.' Too often that is our reply to the Master as He bids us launch out into the deep—bids us hope, and believe, and endeavour. We meet Him with a bit of barren experience. We fling in His face the bitter cry of life's unfruitful hours—and for the response of faith we substitute the misleading logic of an empty boat.

3. Once more, the men who succeeded were the men who had failed. Failure is not a standing disability in the service of the Kingdom. In the

world it is sometimes a final disqualification, an unpardonable sin. The world says to the failures, 'Stand aside and let someone else try. You have had your chance. Now make room for a better man.' He is always a better man, this man who has not tried. The world is quite agreeable that the boat should be launched again, but it stipulates for a different crew. And some are too ready to accept the stipulation, and drop out. Note the way of Jesus. 'Launch out,' you men who but lately came ashore with empty nets. That is Christ's way with the depressed worker. It may be that some of us have a keen and humiliating sense of the futility of some past days. It may be that there is a sigh of despondency in our hearts, a shadow of indifference upon our outlook. Our work has taken a good deal out of us. No work is any good that doesn't do that. The price of our best work is heartache. But whilst the aching is at its worst and the bright end of endeavour is for a while out of sight, we are tempted to think many foolish things—tempted to discount the worth of it all, tempted to criticize the conditions of our labour or to distrust the issue of it.

We need many things—more skill, strenuousness, patience; but most of all we need one thing—an ear tuned to catch, through the urgencies, difficulties, monotonies of life, the voice of the great Master of our souls and of our toils. We need the faith folded in Simon's word, 'Nevertheless at thy word.' Oh, if only we can pit the command of Christ against our weariness, our sense of difficulty, and (a harder thing to do) against the reckonings of our experience and the earthly probabilities, then, come what may, each hour shall count for all it ought to count for, and the end shall be the highest success of all, even the doing of God's will.

The livelong day I toiled in vain,
My net no fishes fill:
How can I dare to try again?
Yet at Thy word I will.

How often shall my brother sin?
Must I forgive him still?
Hard hearts can never pardon win:
Lord, at Thy word I will.

How can I strive in aught to shine,
So scanty is my skill?
'Be perfect'—the command is Thine,
Hearing Thy word, I will.

Harder than any work, methinks,
To suffer and be still:
Though at the thought the spirit shrinks—
Lord, by Thy grace I will! [1]

Conviction of Sin.

Luke v. 8.—'When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.'

When Simeon, the infant Jesus in his arms, uttered his parting hymn within the Temple, he told Mary that by that Child 'the thoughts of many hearts should be revealed.' Never was prophecy more true; never, perhaps, was the mission of the Christian religion more faithfully defined. For wherever it has spread, it has operated like a new and Diviner conscience to the world; imparting to the human mind a profounder insight into itself; opening to its consciousness fresh powers and better aspirations; and penetrating it with a sense of imperfection, a concern for the moral frailties of the will, characteristic of no earlier age. The spirit of religious penitence, the solemn confession of unfaithfulness, the prayer for mercy, are the growth of our nature trained in the school of Christ. The pure image of His mind, as it has passed from land to land, has taught men more of their own hearts than have all the ancient aphorisms of self-knowledge; has inspired more sadness at the evil, more noble hope for the good that is hidden there, and has placed within reach of even the ignorant, and the neglected, severer principles of self-scrutiny than philosophy has ever attained. The radiance of so great a sanctity has deepened the shades of conscious sin. The savage convert, who before knew nothing more sacred than revenge and war, is brought to Jesus, and, as he listens to that voice, he feels the stain of blood growing distinct upon his soul. The voluptuary, never before disturbed in his self-indulgence, comes within the atmosphere of Christ's spirit, and it is as if a gale of heaven fanned his fevered brow. The ambitious priest, revolving plans for using men's passions as tools of his aggrandizement, starts to find himself the disciple of One

[1] F. Cornish, *Week by Week*, 69.

who, when the people would have made Him king, fled direct to solitude and prayer.

So deep and overwhelming did the sense of guilt become under the influence of Christian thought that at length the overburdened heart of fervent times could endure the weight no longer: the Confessional arose to relieve it and restore a periodic peace. It became the chief object of the widest sacerdotal order which the world has ever seen, to listen to the whispered record of human penitence. Cities, as if conscious of their corruption, bade the silent minster rise amid their streets, where, instead of the short daily or Sabbath service, unceasing orisons might be said for sin; where the door might open to the touch all day, and the lamp be seen beneath the vault by night, and the passer-by, caught by the low chant, might be tempted to exchange the chase of vanity without for the peace of prayer within. And so, in every ancient village church of Europe there is a corner that has been moistened with the tears of many generations; and the cathedral aisle, emblem of the mighty heart of Christendom, has for centuries swelled with the plaint of penitential music. In private dwellings, too, each morning and evening has for ages past seen many sad and lowly prayers ascend. Everywhere the Christian mind proclaims its need of mercy, and bends beneath the oppression of its guilt; and since Jesus began to 'reveal the thoughts of many hearts,' Christendom, with clasped hands, has fallen at His feet and cried, 'We are sinful men, O Lord.'

¶ The more we realize God as ever present, almighty and omniscient, holy, full of compassion, and deserving both our fear and love, the more we learn to hate and mourn over the sins that we have done to His dishonour. But of such sorrow there must be outward evidence. Confession, then, becomes an imperative necessity. The inward grief must have an outlet. We confess, because we could not do otherwise. And we feel that, although the past cannot be undone, there is some slight reparation to the wounded love of a heavenly Father when we enumerate the details of our offence, by thought, word and deed.[1]

Drop, drop, slow tears,
And bathe those beauteous feet
Which brought from Heaven
The news and Prince of Peace:
Cease not, wet eyes,
His mercy to entreat;
To cry for vengeance
Sin doth never cease.
In your deep floods
Drown all my faults and fears:
Nor let His eye
See sin, but through my tears.[1]

[1] Edward Churton.

1. Peter was to rise to an exalted position in the Kingdom of God, but the law of the Kingdom must needs be fulfilled in him: 'He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.' This closer communion could be only with a heart less full of self. This higher position could be obtained only by one who would first sink lower. The more honourable service would be granted only to one who was prepared by a deep inward experience. And this essential experience, which was as the door of his future, which was indispensable for the character he must possess and for the work he was to do, was that conviction of sin and unworthiness which caused him to cry out, 'Depart from me; for I am a sinful man.'

(1) Yet it was not the teaching of the Master that wrought this conviction in Simon. In his heart, doubtless, there lay slumbering this sense of unworthiness, there dwelt, but bound and voiceless, this conviction of sinfulness. Yet it was not by the words of the Redeemer that this slumbering sense was wakened, this dumb consciousness endowed with speech. Of all that throng probably none had a wider acquaintance with Christ's teaching than Simon. He was present, too, in the boat which served the Redeemer for a pulpit, able to mark every tone and gesture of the Divine Teacher. Yet he remained unconvicted. And He who 'knew what was in man' was content to stoop that He might raise up; and, as if confessing the failure of His own utterance, wrought a miracle for the fisherman's conversion, and one, too, a fisherman could understand—a miracle concerned with boats and nets and fish.

(2) Nor was it the recent commission of some sinful act that awakened this sense of sinfulness. The very act which preceded the awakening was one of faith and obedience. Though the night's

[1] Phineas Fletcher.

toil had proved fruitless, yet, upon the Master's command to let down the net, faith and obedience prompted these tired and disappointed men to fulfil His command. It was not the self-reproach of a tardy obedience that made Simon Peter conscious of sin. Neither does the gospel narrative suggest that our Lord showed the disciple the follies, errors, and sins of his by-gone life. But rather, in one moment, startled out of slumber, endowed with speech after long silence, the sense of sin sprang into activity and he cried, 'I am a sinful man, O Lord.'

2. What caused this intense conviction which compelled confession?

(1) Luke points out at least one side of the explanation: 'for he was astonished.' Startled men speak their feeling unhampered by considerations of expediency. In the moment of astonishment we cast off deceits by which we have been bound, perhaps willingly bound for years. An unlooked-for meeting, an unexpected face or voice, will with many so awaken memories that, startled thereby, they appear the men they are, not the men they feign to be.

(2) But helpful as is this power of surprise, it was something mightier that brought about this conviction in Simon. Behind the unexpected lay the miraculous; behind that which was merely startling there was something not of this sphere, but supernatural and Divine. In the miracle there was manifest Divine knowledge of 'whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas,' power to guide the denizens of the deep into the net let down at His command.

(3) But, more than this, through the veil of Divine knowledge and power there beamed forth the Divine sanctity. In the person of Him who wrought the miracle there dwelt that which was Divine—almighty power, unsearchable wisdom—and that also which with the Israelite always accompanied the Divine—sanctity. And in the outbeaming of that sanctity, as brightest lights cast deepest shadows so this startled man saw the real character of his heart, saw that in him sin abode, and cried out, 'Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.'

It was a moment of intense struggle in the heart of Simon. There was the sense of sin making him conscious of his unbecoming nearness to the Holy One of God. There was the sense of demerit making him feel the immeasurable distance, the profound gulf between himself and the All Holy. This made him cry, 'Depart from me.' But, on the other hand, there was the sense of need that would not let the sinner leave the Saviour whom he bade depart. There was the craving for something better that made him fall at Christ's feet, suppliant for a blessing. Within him there went on that conflict between conscious demerit and the yearning for purity to which the author of *The Christian Year* gives such bold expression:

> How shall we speak to Thee, O Lord,
> Or how in silence lie?
> Look on us, and we are abhorr'd,
> Turn from us, and we die.

To Simon it was the hour of crisis; he had fallen low, but he was to be raised up. In his service of Christ he had lent a boat for the Master's pulpit, now he was to catch men. He had begun the day a disciple and auditor; he was to end it an apostle elect. He had 'humbled himself,' had learnt the lesson of his own sinfulness, and had learnt it in the out-beaming of Christ's holiness; he had been shown his unworthiness, not only for Christ's service, but even to stand in His presence; and out of that humiliation there came to him exaltation; the 'broken and contrite heart' Christ did not despise.

> Out of the gulf into the glory,
> Father, my soul cries out to be lifted.
> Dark is the woof of my dismal story,
> Thorough thy sun-warp stormily drifted!—
> Out of the gulf into the glory,
> Lift me, and save my story.
>
> I have done many things merely shameful;
> I am a man ashamed, my Father!
> My life is ashamed and broken and blameful—
> The broken and blameful, oh, cleanse and gather!
> Heartily shame me, Lord, of the shameful!
> To my judge I flee with my blameful.
> . . . . . .
> O Father, O Brother, my heart is sore aching!
> Help it to ache as much as is needful;

Is it you cleansing me, mending, remaking,
Dear potter-hands, so tender and heedful?
Sick of my past, of my own self aching—
Hurt on, dear hands, with your making.

Proud of the form thou hadst given thy vessel,
Proud of myself, I forgot my donor;
Down in the dust I began to nestle,
Poured thee no wine, and drank deep of dishonour!
Lord, thou hast broken, thou mendest thy vessel!
In the dust of thy glory I nestle.[1]

The Mancatcher.

Luke v. 10.—'Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.'

THE words were addressed to Simon Peter, the fisherman of Bethsaida. At the moment he heard them he was overwhelmed with a new and deep sense of his own unworthiness. This was the *preparation* of the gospel fisherman. As he dwelt upon the words a wonderful vista opened up before him of privilege and responsibility. He felt the glory of the *vocation* of the gospel fisherman. As he went forward in the new life he became increasingly conscious of his insufficiency for so high a calling, his mind dwelt upon the supreme *qualification* of the gospel fisherman. So let these three points, the preparation, the vocation, and the supreme qualification of the gospel fisherman, guide our thoughts to-day.

1. It was by a singular *preparation* that Peter was led up to this great crisis in his life. We see him and his companions, busily engaged in washing their nets, which, after a long night's toil, were empty of everything except weeds and mud. Peter, therefore, was tired and perhaps a little dispirited when Jesus came up and begged the loan of his boat that from it He might more easily address the multitude that was massed together on the lake-side. But as Peter listened to the sermon and watched the eager upturned faces of the people drinking in the Master's words the gloom lifted, Peter was captured and carried away by the sympathy and power of that Master Fisher of men, and a new ambition, a desire to take some part himself in the Divine work of winning men, began to be awakened within him.

(1) But, as Matthew Henry says, 'those whom the Master designs to admit into close and intimate fellowship with Himself He first makes sensible that they deserve to be at the greatest distance from Him.' 'To this man will I look,' said He whose Throne is the Heavens and whose footstool is the Earth, 'even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.' None can hope to win men by the Word unless they have first learnt to tremble at that Word. The flippant and shallow spirit which treats the Word of the living God as if it were the word of fallible men must be allowed no peace in those who would catch men. So, whenever God is about to send men forth to do signal service, He causes them to pass through a time of spiritual travail so as to bring them to an end of their self-sufficiency. It was so with Isaiah when the prophet cried, 'Woe is me! for I am undone.' It was so with Saul of Tarsus, who fell to the ground trembling and astonished, smitten down by the glory and by the Word of the Lord. It was so with Daniel and Job, and with the Apostle John in the isle of Patmos. It was so on this occasion with Simon Peter as he fell at Jesus' knees crying, 'Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' Preparation for service commences with a deep, real, overwhelming sense of personal unworthiness.

(2) But this sense of unworthiness is not always or generally brought about, at any rate in the first instance, by a vision of hell or a discovery of the reality of God's holy wrath against sin. In Peter's case it was the result of a revelation of the human sympathy and Divine sufficiency of Jesus. This is what brings us to Christ's feet in lifelong penitence and surrender. It is when Jesus meets us on the plane of our secular life and shows His perfect sympathy with all our human needs; when He comes near to us and fills our empty nets, ministering to us Divine comfort in days of anxiety and sorrow and need—it is then that we tremble at His presence, then that we recognize the deep gulf which separates us from the sinless Christ, then that we cry, 'I am a sinful man, O Lord.' He is the best fisherman of other sinful men who learns again and again from close

[1] George Macdonald.

fellowship with God what a really sinful man he is himself.

2. The second point is the *vocation* of the gospel fisherman. 'From henceforth thou shalt catch men.' It was a double magnifying of Peter's former calling. Till now he had caught fish. Henceforth he should catch men. Till now he had caught fish for death; the fish he caught could not live in that higher air to which his net sought to draw them. Now he should catch men for life; for only as the gospel net brings them into the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ do men begin to know what true life is.

To win souls, to catch men for God—there is no more glorious service in all the world. Angels covet it. For this God gave His only Begotten Son. To this Jesus consecrated Himself. It is so glorious that in comparison with it all other pursuits seem mean and unworthy. Some men live to win games, others to win money, others to win fame and political power; the follower of Jesus, the true gospel fisherman, lives to win souls. No wonder that the wise man said, 'He that winneth souls is wise.' There is no merchandise like that of souls. For nothing of less value would the Son of God have laid down His life. In the great day of final reckoning one soul won for Christ will out-value a thousandfold all the money prizes and honours of earth.

(1) But it is an unspeakably solemn calling. The medical man knows that the lives of his patients depend largely upon his skill. But he deals only with their earthly and mortal life. The gospel physician deals with the life of the soul, the life that is unending. If he is negligent or unskilful, or if he wearies in the work of casting the gospel net, the sin of blood-guiltiness rests upon him, and he is responsible for the loss of an immortal soul. Yes, it is so; each one of us is in some measure, and the ordained minister is to a very special degree, his brother's keeper. The sovereignty of God does not do away with the responsibility of each individual fisherman. We are put in trust with the gospel. Christ is depending upon us. He has no other plan for the winning of men than that all those who know the joyful sound should make it known to others. The ultimate success or failure of the Cross in the work of winning individual men depends upon our faithfulness.

(2) The work, moreover, is peculiarly difficult. Men give but slight heed to spiritual things. They are preoccupied. They are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life. They think themselves perfectly satisfied without Christ. They are so enamoured of the life that now is that with a gambler's recklessness they are prepared to risk an eternity of misery and loss rather than give up the transitory pleasures of sin. Above all, they are encased in prejudice and fortified with unbelief. To win the city of Man's Soul requires the courage and resource and heroic persistence of a daring warrior, as well as the patience and skill of a fisherman.

(3) Yet the Master's word leaves no excuse for doubt or fear. His 'thou shalt catch men' is a guarantee of success. He undertakes to make His disciples fishers of men, not merely fishers for men. There is something wrong with our following of Christ if we lose the art of winning men for Him. In these days of perplexity, when the foundations of our faith are widely questioned, we cannot afford to be without this supreme proof that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Conversions to-day hold the place occupied by miracles of healing in the time of our Lord and His Apostles. We know that Jesus is the Christ because still in a very real and blessed sense the blind see, the deaf hear, and lepers are cleansed. So lift up your hearts. Do not be afraid of your vocation. Christ summons us not to a forlorn hope, but to the conquest of all lands, the gathering out from all nations of the people that shall be His own. 'Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry,' and then 'the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.'

3. And now for the supreme *qualification* of the gospel fisherman. There are many qualifications.

(1) The first is that keen desire to bring others to Christ which is instinctive in everyone who has truly found Christ. Those who are born of God have no option in this matter. They say, like Paul, 'Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!' The truth which brings us to God and saves us from

sin would cease to be regarded by us as true unless we sought to make others believe it too. An unbelieving age disparages what it calls proselytizing. The true believer must proselytize. If we believe that Christ died for all men, we cannot refrain from persistent endeavour to bring all men to recognize His sovereign rights. If we believe, we must speak. If we withhold our testimony, we shall before long have no testimony to give.

(2) A second qualification is the Master's commission. While all who know Christ are bound to seek to make Him known, those who are set apart for the ministry of the Word and Sacraments are specially commissioned by Christ to this work. This special commission necessitates special concentration. The immediate result of the Master's word to Simon Peter was that 'when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.' All who love Christ are called to lend a hand at the gospel plough and with the gospel net, but not all are called to leave their father's plough, as did Elisha of Abelmeholah, or to leave their father's nets, as did the sons of Zebedee. The minister of the gospel is privileged to live only for the gospel. He has no need to take his stand in the vineyard or mart. He can afford to be entirely ignorant of the ups and downs of the money market. His calling is to win souls, and it is part of his qualification that he has left all secular interests to follow the Master, who alone can teach him how to do it.

(3) But the supreme qualification is the unction of the Holy Spirit. You remember the words of the ancient hymn to the Holy Spirit—'Thy blessèd unction from above is comfort, life, and fire of love.' This is what every man must have to be a true fisher of men. There must be comfort—the comfort of a God-given assurance that the gospel is true, that Jesus can save, that things unseen are eternal and real; the comfort of that certainty which the Holy Ghost gives us concerning those things which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, and which pass man's understanding. There must be life, fullness of life, abundance of health and vigour. For if our life is feeble and our joy scant, we cannot be used to quicken those who are dead in sin. And there must be fire of love, not the fire of eloquence, or sarcasm, or repartee, but the fire of love—love that burns; love that yearns; love that holds on; love that never lets go. This is the supreme qualification. Men are not vanquished by argument; they are won by love. Men will not be driven by ecclesiastical fulminations. They are drawn by personal influence. The unction of the Holy Ghost is the supreme qualification for the gospel fisherman.

¶ In consequence of the operation of laws made against Non-conformity, 2,000 ministers left the Established Church of England, or rather were expelled from it. They could not conscientiously conform, so they had no alternative but to resign their offices. Some of these men were accustomed to hold religious meetings at a certain Midland town. Among others who took part in this good work was the celebrated and saintly Richard Baxter, the author of *The Saint's Everlasting Rest*. These meetings were held early in the morning, in order to avoid disturbance or interruption from the authorities. On one occasion, when it came to Baxter's turn to officiate, he started for the place the evening before, in order to be ready for the service early in the morning. The night being dark he lost his way, and after wandering about for a considerable time he came to a gentleman's house, where he made inquiry as to the place. The gentleman thinking it unseemly and unsafe that such a respectable-looking man should be wandering about at that late hour asked him in, and treated him very hospitably. He was highly gratified with Baxter's pleasing manners and intelligent conversation. So after supper, being anxious to find out the quality and employment of his guest, he said to him, 'As most people have some profession or pursuit in life, I presume, sir, that you have yours.' 'O yes,' said Baxter, 'I am a mancatcher.' 'A mancatcher, are you?' said the host; 'I'm very glad to hear it, for you're just the man I want. I am a justice of the Peace, and have a commission to arrest a fellow called Dick Baxter, who, I understand is to preach at a convention, not far from this, in the morning. You will come with me, and I have no doubt but we will apprehend the rogue.' 'Oh, all right, I'll accompany you in the morning, and I have little fear but we will lay our hands on him.' Next morning the magistrate and the mancatcher rode off to the place of meeting, and found a few people walking about as if afraid to enter the

house. The magistrate now began to fear that he would be disappointed after all, as Baxter had not yet arrived. He proposed that they should ride a little further along the road and allow the people time to assemble. When they returned, they found a number of people still walking about as if afraid to enter the place of meeting; but no preacher appeared. Despairing of success, the gentleman remarked to Baxter, that, as many of the people were disaffected to the Government, it might be well if he would give them an address on the duty of loyalty and good conduct. Baxter replied that as the people had come there for religious purposes, such an address would hardly satisfy them. 'However,' said he, 'as I believe it is usual to begin their meeting with prayer, if you will first engage in prayer, then I will try to give them an address.' The gentleman excused himself on the ground that he had not his prayer-book with him, but remarked that he had no doubt that Baxter could pray with them as well as address them, and he would be glad if he would do so. This was just what Baxter wanted; so calling the people together, he prayed so earnestly and powerfully that his would-be captor was deeply impressed and strongly moved. Baxter next proceeded to preach to them in his earnest and pointed way, and when he had done, turning to the magistrate he said, 'I'm Dick Baxter whom you are in search of, and now I am at your service.' The gentleman's enmity was changed to friendship, and he became Baxter's firm friend, and also, it was believed, a sincere and devout Christian. This man went out to catch Richard, and Richard caught him.

¶ In an address which he once gave at Hugh Price Hughes' West-End Mission, Mr. Crossley (who had once been a noted fisher) spoke as follows:—

'How are we to attract the most people into this earthly and yet heavenly paradise? That is a much-vexed question. What, for example, are legitimate means? or *what is legitimate bait?* I confess I am somewhat familiar with the flies and worms in use among fishers of men. . . . I believe I only know one safe kind. We must be the bait ourselves and be willing to be gobbled up. We must not come decked with gold or costly array . . . if we accept service in the ranks of the lowly-hearted Master. . . . Reality first and last. If this is forgotten people will turn on us and say, properly enough, that they would rather be real and in hell than humbugs and in heaven. But this, thank God, is not the alternative. As a matter of fact the humbugs will all be in hell and the real folks in heaven. Let us be real, *i.e.*, really like the Master, filled with His love and His self-sacrifice, and we shall soon prove a very catching lot. *No other bait will be wanted if the Spirit of Jesus is seen in His followers.*'[1]

Christ's Touch.

Luke v. 13.—'He put forth his hand, and touched him.'

THE man who cannot believe in miracles may be right from the level of his experience. He has taken an earthly plane from which to look; and he is looking the wrong way, down from his own brain into the earth, and not up from his own free soul into the heavens towards the living God. He may be right from his point of view. We cannot, indeed, believe in mere wonders. We cannot believe in anything which we cannot bring into some relation to our experience, and under some law, or rational order of things. If we are unwilling to trust our own souls in their consciousness of spiritual life, we certainly can have little faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God. Begin by defining the whole nature of things so as to leave spirit and God out, and you ought consistently to fly in the face of history, and to deny everything which you cannot put together out of these poor earthly materials in your dead mechanism of a universe. In a word, to the man who believes only in the lower and worse half of himself, his body, Jesus cannot be the Son of Man sent from God. But if our own hearts and souls have ever taught us more than our eyes can see or our hands touch; if we have once, in any moment of free thought or power of spiritual purpose, known ourselves to be more than bodies of dust, bound to the unceasing treadmill of things; if we have ever, in the mastery of spirit over things, learned that the first and final powers of this universe are in nature but above it, spiritual, Divine, eternal—then we may understand better Jesus' miracles. We may look down upon them as He did, from the higher plane of forces upon which He lived,

[1] J. Rendel Harris, *The Life of Francis William Crossley*, 43.

and see that they are the orderly effects of higher causes.

The miracle of our text made a deep impression on the mind of the Early Church. This is proved by the fact that it is related by all the Synoptic writers, and that, too, in nearly identical terms. They introduce it, however, in somewhat different connections. In Matthew it follows immediately the account of the Sermon on the Mount. In Mark it is placed without any definite note of time during the course of the second Galilean journey. In Luke its position is evidently determined not so much by the time of its actual occurrence as by the Evangelist's well-known principle of historic grouping.

The exact locality of the occurrence is left equally indeterminate. The first two Evangelists make no mention of place at all, while the third says merely that it was 'in one of the cities' of Galilee through which the Lord was passing. But, as lepers were strictly forbidden to enter any camp or town, the words must be interpreted generally, as pointing to some spot immediately outside the walls. It is remarkable that even there the leper should have ventured to draw near to the Saviour, surrounded as He would be by a great multitude. And an explanation has been sought in the fact on which Luke again lays stress, that the man was 'full of leprosy.' His disease, that is, had reached such dimensions that he came under the strange provision of the law: 'If the leprosy break out abroad in the skin, and the leprosy cover all the skin of him that hath the plague, from his head even to his feet . . . then the priest . . . shall pronounce him clean that hath the plague' (Lev. xiii. 12, 13). But this explanation, though possible, is hardly likely in the case before us. The leper's defiance of all the obstacles that human callousness had placed in his pathway was probably due simply to the eager faith which marks all his conduct, and which could not rest until it found itself in the immediate presence of the great Healer. And this faith is the more remarkable when we remember that as yet there had been no instance of the cleansing of a leper in the course of the Judæan or Galilean ministry, and that in view of the light in which his disease was generally regarded by his fellow-countrymen, the poor sufferer might well have thought himself to be outside the range of the Saviour's healing power. On whatever his trust was founded, there could be no doubt as to its reality and persistence. The leper did not wait to be called, or to be brought; he himself took the initiative. He came to Jesus, beseeching Him, and kneeling down to Him (Mark) and worshipping (Matthew), until at length he prostrated himself on his face before Him with the cry, 'Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.'

1. *The leper's malady.*—Leprosy is minutely described in the Book of Leviticus, and seems to have had its origin among the Israelites while they were labouring among the dust and heat of the brick-kilns of Egypt. It makes its appearance first upon the skin in the shape of certain spots, small at the outset and of a reddish colour, but gradually increasing in size, and presenting by and by a white, scaly, shining aspect. After a time the spots spread over the whole body, 'the hair falls from the head and eyebrows; the nails loosen, decay and drop off; joint after joint of the fingers and toes shrink up and slowly fall away. The gums are absorbed, and the teeth disappear. The nose, the eyes, the tongue, the palate are slowly consumed . . . while medicine has no power to stay the ravages of this fell disease or even to mitigate sensibly its tortures.' Leprosy was thus in point of fact a living death. After the priest had pronounced that a man was really afflicted with it, he was rigidly cut off from all fellowship with his fellows, and was compelled to put on the marks of mourning which were usually worn for the dead. He had his clothes rent, his head bare and his lips covered, and whenever he saw anyone approaching he had to give them warning of his proximity by calling out 'Unclean! unclean!' These precautions were taken not merely for sanitary reasons, or to guard against contagion—for it is not certain that leprosy was contagious—but in order that the people might be taught, through the parable of leprosy, what a fearful and loathsome thing is sin in the sight of God. As has already been said, no medicine could effect either its mitigation or its cure. The leper might perhaps recover, but he was not cured, for, as Dr. Thomson has said,[1] 'leprosy has ever been regarded as a direct punishment from God, and absolutely incurable, except by the same divine power that sent it.' Hence

[1] *The Land and the Book*, 654.

the King of Israel, when the King of Syria sent Naaman to him, that he might recover him of his leprosy, said, 'Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?'

We can easily see how readily, in consequence, leprosy came to be used in the Christian Church as the type of sin in general, though it ought to be noted that it is never directly so spoken of in the Bible itself. The nearest approach is in Psalm li. 7, where, with evident reference to the cleansing of the leper, the Psalmist prays, 'Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.' But from the time of the Fathers the comparison is a favourite one, and it is obvious how naturally it lends itself to homiletic treatment. In its insidious beginning, in its gradual and increasingly repulsive growth, and in its fatal ending, the fell disease presents only too significant points of contact with the power and progress of evil; while the means prescribed for its ceremonial cleansing may easily be shown to be emblematic of the restoration and renewal of the sinner.

2. *The leper's faith.*—Matthew says, 'He came and worshipped him'; and Mark puts it thus: 'There came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him,' thus manifesting both his earnestness and his reverence, and saying, 'If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.' He had, therefore, no doubt of the ability of Christ to heal him, and that, considering the incurable nature of leprosy, was an indication of great faith. How he came to have such faith in the power of Christ we are not told. But he must have heard of His miracles of healing elsewhere, and though this is the first recorded instance of the cure of a leper by the Lord, there was in this man's heart an unwavering assurance that the Lord could make him clean, if He would. There might be the ability without the will, or the will without the ability, but his hope was that in Christ there would be the combination of both, and all that was needed for that, in his estimation, was the will. He was sure of the ability. After all that He had heard, he could not doubt that, and so it all hinged on this 'if thou wilt.' But he need not have doubted that either. For the Lord was never unwilling to bless those who were willing to receive blessing at His hands. So we are told that, 'moved with compassion,' He 'put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean.'

George Macdonald wrote a book on the miracles of our Lord, dividing them into classes. He places this miracle among those that were wrought in answer to the personal prayers of the sufferers. After speaking of the leper's prayer to Jesus, he says: 'I think the man who believes and prays now has answers to his prayers even better than those which came to the sick in Judæa; for although the bodily presence of Jesus made a difference in their favour, I do believe that the Spirit of God, after widening its channels for nearly nineteen hundred years, can flow in greater plenty and richness now. Hence the answers to prayers not only must not be of quite the same character as then, but they must be better, coming yet closer to the heart of the need, whether known as such by him who prays or not. But the change lies in man's power of reception, for God is always the same to His children. Only, being infinite, He must speak to them and act for them in the endless diversity which their growth and change render necessary. Thus only they can receive of His fulness who is all in all and unchangeable.'[1]

3. *The touch of Jesus.*—'He put forth his hand and touched him.' The 'touch' of Jesus on this occasion is recalled by all three Evangelists. It was, perhaps, the feature of the cleansing that, at the moment, most arrested the attention of the onlookers. It would certainly go straight home to the heart of the leper himself. Ever since his dire malady had seized him he had been wholly removed from contact with his fellow-men. At that very moment the surrounding spectators would be drawing hurriedly back, lest by the mere touch of his garment they should be defiled. But Jesus had no such fear. He was the perfectly Pure One, to whom all things were pure. And setting aside, according to His wont, the mere letter of the Mosaic Law for its spirit, or rather substituting for the outward law the eternal and Divine law of compassion, He by his touch broke down the barriers by which hitherto the leper had been surrounded, and restored him to his lost fel-

[1] G. Macdonald, *The Miracles of our Lord*, 113.

lowship with God and man. For the act was accompanied, as we have seen, by a redeeming and creative word. 'If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean,' the leper had pleaded in humble submission. And the very words of his prayer supplied the words of the Saviour's answer, as promptly there came back the comforting assurance, from which the very idea of an 'if' was banished: 'I will; be thou made clean.' And 'straightway'—and the word again finds a place in all the accounts—'his leprosy was cleansed.'

What a thrill of joy would vibrate in the man's heart at that unwonted experience! The miracle altogether apart, that was the first touch of love he had felt from human hand since first he was isolated from men; and it was the touch of One who was the holiest that ever wore our mortal frame. 'Here is one,' he might say within himself, 'and He the purest of them all, who is not afraid to touch me, outcast, loathsome as I am, and so, whatever comes of it, I bless Him for that touch, for there is love, and sympathy and tenderness in it.' But there was healing too; for the leper's flesh came to him again, as the flesh of a little child, and from that moment he was clean. If others had touched him, they would have been defiled thereby; but when the pure One put His hand upon him, He communicated thereby His own purity to him, and the disease retired from before His hand of power.

¶ The cases of bodily healing by Christ come nearest to phenomena we can observe in our own day. We feel that we can understand, in some measure, the power of a Divinely great Personality and a perfectly Holy Will on the currents of life in the human frame. In a lower and feebler degree we see something like it among ourselves. Under the commanding influence of a strong 'magnetic' personality we have seen the tide of hope rising to health and strength where before it was ebbing away. We cannot doubt that God in these days uses, for healing, this influence of man upon man. Confidence in the doctor, we commonly say, is half the battle. In Edinburgh and neighbourhood it used to be often said that a visit from the great Dr. Simpson did more good to the patients than his medicine—his sympathy, his hopefulness, his goodness and piety, his resolute will to heal were so strong and comforting; his personality was so winsome, and stimulating, and commanding.

Walt Whitman, the American poet, went out in the great Civil War to act as nurse to the wounded, and from the battlefield he wrote to his mother: 'I believe that even the moving around among the men, or through the ward, of a hearty, healthy, clean, strong, generous-hearted person, man or woman, full of humanity and love, sending out invisible constant currents thereof, does immeasurable good to the sick and wounded.' Whitman described himself in those words, and we cannot doubt that invisible currents of human sympathy are most mighty healing forces. We cannot doubt that the Divine power uses them for that purpose. God himself inspires them and expresses His own Life in them.

Sympathy is a human force—a Divine force in man—of which we hardly know the alphabet. It is the act, not of a weak soul, but of a strong one. We sometimes misunderstand here, and say that the strong and healthy cannot sympathize with weakness and infirmity. But truly they alone can fully sympathize. The truest sympathy can come only from a healthy, happy personality. Browning indeed says, in one of those passages of deep spiritual insight that abound in his pages—

> I think this is the authentic sign and seal
> Of Godship, that it ever waxes glad
> And more glad, until gladness blossoms, bursts
> Into a rage to suffer for mankind,
> And recommence at sorrow.

The Divine necessity for the Incarnation was never more nobly asserted. And surely this is 'the authentic sign and seal' of Man-ship too. The powers of manhood come to their best when out of our very strength and joy and freedom, and because of our very gladness in them, the feeling springs that we must identify ourselves with the sorrow of the world. Sympathy of this true and fine quality is the Divine power working in our midst. And it came to its perfection in Jesus. His nature was perfectly free from any cause for sorrow on His own account. A happy, healthy, whole personality! His only cause for sorrow was the sin and suffering of man. And so the power of His sympathy is of so subtle and fine a quality that it passes beyond our comprehension. His sympathy reaches to such profound depths

of Divine life that we can only stand before it as before an abyss of mystery. He knew what joy was! He knew therefore how to sympathize with joyless lives. And He knew what sympathetic sorrow was! His sympathy was never vitiated or weakened by personal imperfection, and so it was perfect sympathy, and possessed the power of such self-identification with God and man.[1]

¶ Some years ago the *Cornhill Magazine* contained a poem on 'Sister Rose Gertrude,' who devoted her life, like Father Damien, to the lepers. The poem opened and closed thus:—

Sister Rose, when saw you the Lord?
Did you gaze at Him coming from off the hill
When the leper cried, and He said, 'I will:
Be clean'! Or when did the angels meet
And strew the lilies about your feet,
And press your hands to the sword?

It matters little: the angels came,
Passed through the streets of the troubled town
To the quiet village beneath the Down;
They touched your soul, and they opened your eyes,
They fired an altar of sacrifice,
And cast your heart in the flame.

And ever since then your grey hills gleamed
As grey as the native hills He knew,
Who loved His friends to the death and drew
The whole world after; yea, yonder mill,
With its arms outstretched on the top of the hill
Like a cross in the darkness seemed.

Christ's Challenge.

Luke v. 20.—'And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.'

We are to think of a great crowd surging all round the house, the same modest house, perhaps, in which Peter's mother-in-law had been healed of her fever, and at the doors of which, that evening also, all the city had been gathered. Jesus had not gone out to them, either because His comparative retirement had begun already, or else, more probably, because He was already encompassed by the 'doctors,' who were present more or less officially. (A formal embassy had, not long before, cross-examined the forerunner about both his person and his baptism, John i. 19). These men we find proudly seated in the centre of a crowd which densely filled what we may suppose to have been a large upper room, low-built, and extending over all the lower apartments of the house. It is just possible that, according to Dean Plumptre's conjecture, our Lord stood so as to address, from such a vantage ground, a concourse in the courtyard around which the rooms were grouped. The roof of the house was formed of poles laid about three feet apart, and across these short sticks covered with brushwood were laid. Mortar was spread over this, and on it was sometimes a coating of thick earth, sometimes tiles. Luke distinctly tells us that in this case the tiles had to be taken up, and this may be added to the many indications that the Apostles lived in humble comfort.

Thomson in *The Land and the Book* tells us that he has himself seen stone slabs used for the purpose, and that grain and other commodities are still introduced into upper rooms in this very way, by the outer stairs and the roof. The idea, therefore, would not be unfamiliar to these people urged by a dire necessity and debarred by the crowd from any other access.

It was, nevertheless, an expedient of despair. The noise, the falling rubbish, the inconvenience inflicted upon that dignified and haughty group in the centre made such an interruption as no common teacher would have endured. When the veneration for Jesus deepened, long before sceptical theories could suppose it to have risen to adoration, so audacious an intrusion could never have been invented: the story attests itself as primitive. And it bears a glorious witness to the true character of Him whom suffering could not think of as rejecting its appeal, in the most untoward circumstances, at the most inconvenient time.

1. *Their faith.*—The faith which Jesus honours is not distinguished by its scientific theology. The plan of salvation, or even the doctrine of His own Person, is not what He is most concerned about. Human want and His power to relieve it, the effort of strong volition which brought the want

[1] T. H. Wright, *The Finger of God*, 64.

into immediate contact with His power, these were the essential things throughout His earthly story. May it not still be the same? Is it not likely that the plan of salvation and the doctrine of the Incarnation have been revealed to us rather to strengthen our trust, to persuade us to rely upon Him, than merely to remove inadequacies of intellectual conception? God alone knows how abjectly inadequate are even the most subtle of our formulæ. Presently our knowledge will vanish away. Yet faith, we read, abideth. And whoever knows, whoever can draw fine distinctions and demonstrate delicate theorems—that man has need, perhaps more than most, to search whether he has actually brought his own sin, the plague of his own heart, to Christ the Healer.

When faith is real, it goes beyond itself. God has joined us together in families, friendships, nations and the church, in order that none may live to himself or die to himself only. And it is quite clear that the most isolated unit in a nation is better, through its organization, than if he had grown up alone, a wild man of the woods. The rearmost man in that vast army has marched some way from absolute savagery. And so it is in religion. There may seem to be theoretical hardship for the isolated, for the friendless, in the advantage enjoyed by the child of many prayers; but the lonely man is himself the better for it; and his soul is stronger than if the knot were untied which binds others in a closer sympathy than he experiences. Accordingly Jesus, seeing the faith of five, spoke words of grace to one of them.

¶ We gain by sharing, and we lose by excluding. Why, then, should we fear the further extension of a principle which works so well wherever it has been tried? We shall all be happier and freer when the whole community is happier and freer. We shall the better enjoy our dinner when we know that nobody is going without one. The accumulated well-being of a whole people will be, for the individual, what the accumulated enthusiasm of a great audience is for each member of it. The mighty pulse of the whole will flow through every separate personality, and fill it with its own fulness. In the gradual process which brings about this result—for it will be an evolution not a revolution—those who give up will, in so doing, make an investment which will yield them better dividends than they ever knew before. They will be the sharers of and partakers in a larger life.[1]

2. *The man's sins.*—We have to think of one to whom bodily trouble had become a revelation. Instead of querulously murmuring against Providence, he had learned the great lesson of his own demerit. The shadow of a depressing and melancholy complaint, its gloomy memories and yet more gloomy forebodings, had taught him self-knowledge. Perhaps his malady was directly connected with some act of sin or course of excess; perhaps he had only discerned the more subtle connection between all suffering and all sin. It is clear that when the news of a great and gentle Teacher, who was also a supreme Healer, reached him, his soul connected pardon with recovery, and longed for health as being indeed one thing with salvation. Who can tell how much this profound desire, inspired of God, had to do with the ingenious and audacious pertinacity by which at last his spiritual hunger reached the Bread of Life? As Jesus looked on him, and saw all this sacred sorrow, this hunger and thirst after righteousness appealing to Him out of hollow eyes, the first two Gospels tell us with what a word of love He first broke silence. In Luke it is 'Man, thy sins are forgiven thee'; but doubtless the true word is 'Son,' the same affectionate epithet with which His own mother had once addressed her lost son in the Temple.

They come to Thee, the halt, the maimed, the blind,
The devil-torn, the sick, the sore;
Thy heart their well of life they find,
Thine ear their open door.

But were I deaf and lame and blind and sore,
I scarce would care for cure to ask;
Another prayer should haunt Thy door—
Set Thee a harder task.

If Thou art Christ, see here this heart of mine,
Torn, empty, moaning, and unblest!
Had ever heart more need of Thine,
If Thine indeed hath rest?

Thy word, Thy hand right soon did scare the bane
That in their bodies death did breed;

[1] J. Brierley, *Religion and To-Day*, 223.

If Thou canst cure my deeper pain
Then art Thou Lord indeed.[1]

3. *Christ's challenge.*—The effect of this miracle on the assembled multitude is described by the three Evangelists who narrate this incident. Matthew writes: 'When the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.' Mark tells us they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying: 'We never saw it on this fashion.' And Luke adds: They 'were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to-day.'

The miracles of our Lord Jesus Christ were the proofs of His Divinity and of His Messiahship. He often appealed to them. 'The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me' (John v. 36). When Nicodemus came to Jesus by night he said: 'Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.' When John the Baptist sent some of his disciples to Jesus saying, 'Art thou he that should come?' (that is, the Messiah), 'or look we for another?' in that same hour Jesus cured many of their infirmities and plagues; and unto many that were blind He gave sight. And He said unto them (quoting almost verbally the Messianic prophecy contained in Isaiah xxxv.), 'Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.' In this miracle of the healing of the paralytic, our Lord distinctly challenges the doubting scribes, by showing that He who with a word can give life and strength to a paralysed man has the right and power to exercise the Divine prerogative of the forgiveness of sins.

(1) The challenge that Jesus made to the scribes and Pharisees arose out of the unspoken challenge they made to Him. In effect they said: 'Let Him justify His outrageous and blasphemous statement that this man's sins are forgiven. Any charlatan can pretend to forgive sins and no one can bring him to the test.' So Jesus challenges them back—'Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be fogriven thee, or to say, Rise up and walk?' Of course the former was easier because, whilst the quack doctor meets with swift and final exposure, the religious charlatan escapes. Jesus deliberately chose the sphere of pain and disease as the battle ground for His tremendous claim to forgive sin.

(2) Jesus is reinforced in His challenge by the instinct of human nature that faith is greater than disease. 'When he saw their faith.' Jesus always sees the hidden best in human nature. He makes men feel that they are almost their own healers, inasmuch as He welcomes their feeble co-operation. He always welcomes the co-operation of human faith, and it is a fact of broad human experience that faith always does rise to meet pain and disease.

This faith, even if it sees no further than the possibility of a cure of bodily ills, is a Divine thing, and the Church must follow her Master in letting stricken and suffering ones know that she is ready to co-operate with them in their struggle for health. They will presently co-operate with her in her struggle with sin—the greatest disease of all.

¶ Mrs. Isabella Bishop gave this emphatic testimony to the work of healing: 'To my thinking, on no one agency for alleviating human suffering can one look with more unqualified satisfaction. The medical mission is the outcome of the living teaching of our faith. I have now visited such missions in many parts of the world, and never saw one which was not healing, helping, blessing; softening prejudices, diminishing suffering, telling in every work of love and of consecrated skill of the infinite compassion of Him Who came, "not to destroy men's lives but to save them."'[1]

Strange Things.

Luke v. 26.—'We have seen strange things to-day.'

THIS is a striking instance of men coming into contact with some of the surprisals of life, namely, with exceptional and unprecedented events; and, as a result, men feeling the awe and sacredness connected with a novel experience. They had come to this moment with a certain stock of knowledge gained by experience, but they were now startled, surprised and terrified by the presence of something in life which they had never known before.

[1] George Macdonald.

[1] W. A. Rice, *Mary Bird in Persia*, 134.

1. The greatness of a life consists largely in its surprisals; it is those that save it from becoming monotonous and commonplace, prosaic and uninteresting. It is those that first startle a man, then open up infinite possibilities before him, and make him stand on the tiptoe of expectation, knowing not what a day may bring forth.

Thus it is surprisals that pre-eminently give meaning and inspiration to life. Our to-days are not repetitions of our yesterdays. We soon learn, if we learn anything in going through life, that life is grandly progressive, that God has many things to say unto us which we have not yet heard, because as yet we are not able to bear them. The man who lives most nearly as God would have him live, who looks out of the eyes which God has given him, eyes least bedimmed with sin and passion and therefore quickly sensitive to every new display of Divine power, wisdom or goodness, ever gets some grand surprisal that adds to the significance of life, and imparts an ecstasy of delight to its experience.

(1) Every *Christmas* morning the Christian may gratefully exclaim, 'We have seen strange things to-day.' There is a new song in the air; there is a new light on all the spaces of life; there is a new hope in the heart. Christmas brings us the Babe that saves the world. At Christmas we enter into the joy of having ourselves become babes in Christ Jesus. He keeps truly the season of the Nativity who feels that Christ has been born in him the hope of glory. Every heart must be the Bethlehem in which Christ is born. Has He been born in ours? Is He cradled in our love? Is He the Child that makes all other children as angels?

(2) Every *Easter* the Christian may exclaim, 'We have seen strange things to-day.' We have seen the tomb opened; we have seen death vanquished; we have seen the incoming of a glorious immortality. Do not let us think of the resurrection of Christ as having been accomplished at a merely historical point of time; let us rather think of it as the light of every Sabbath morning. The true history is not an accident or an event of a moment; its spirit runs through all time, and gives new significance to all events. At Eastertide we feel as if within the social warmth and glory of a birthday, but we must never forget that the birth begun on one Easter-tide reaches through all the intervening days until the following Eastertide shall dawn. 'If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.' The seeking of those things will keep us alive in the Spirit from one year to another.

> Can there be any day but this,
> Though many suns to shine endeavour?
> We count three hundred, but we miss:
> There is but One and that one ever.[1]

(3) Every *Ascension-tide* Christians may exclaim, 'We have seen strange things to-day.' We have seen our blessed Lord enter into a cloud and pass away to His mediatorial throne: 'While he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven' (Luke xxiv. 51). Christians may here and now enter into the spirit of their Lord's ascension. 'Set your affection on things above, and not on things on the earth.' This is the true ascension—the rising up of the soul that it may take possession of heavenly places, and live in the fear and love of God. 'They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.' Never let us think of our own ascension as having to take place at the expiration of unknown years; it may take place now, it should take place every day, for our life is hid with Christ in God. 'How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?' 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.' That great and strange things are to happen, in the order of Divine providence, to individual souls and to the united Church, is perfectly clear to all who receive the Cross with a humble and obedient heart; but we must guard against the possibility of deferred enjoyment, whilst we might even now feel that our affections and interests are essentially in heaven. When Christ shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is; but even now we may grow into the spiritual beauty of our Lord.

> He for all sinners died,
> Was crucified,

[1] George Herbert.

To heaven ascended then,
Where we, the sons of men,
May follow—if we own
We live through Him alone!

(4) When the season of *Pentecost* returns, Christians may exclaim, 'We have seen strange things to-day.' At Pentecost the Holy Ghost was poured out in all the plenitude of His power: 'They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.' As with the Nativity and with Easter-tide and with Ascension day, so with Pentecost. We may have Pentecost in all its highest spiritual signification day by day. 'The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.' 'Covet earnestly the best gifts.' The Spirit is the gift of God. We are living in the dispensation of the Spirit, and should not be satisfied until we are filled with all the fullness of His light and love.

A rushing, mighty wind across the sky,
A swirling, swinging, roaring, ringing breath
Which seems to fill the world, as, flying by,
It sweeps the pathway both of life and death.

Into our hearts it blows, and bears away
All evil thoughts, all hate, and strife, and sin,
All dust of hopes and fears and sorrows gray,
To let the light of love and truth within.

So Charity shall come, a living flame,
A fire divine, a firm and steady glow,
The pulsing light of life, for aye the same,
To make us tender kindly words to know.[1]

2. The word 'strange' is a very interesting word, and is full of significance. It is the word which we have in the English word 'paradox'—'We have seen paradoxical things to-day.' It denotes more than strangeness. The primary meaning is, that which is contrary to the appearance of things. The secondary meaning is, contrary to the notions or opinions we have held. Since it is contrary to appearance, and we have judged from appearance, it is contrary to the notions which we have held up to this point. Then the third meaning of the word is, contrary to that which we have esteemed honourable, true, or noble. Thus the people on this occasion practically said: 'We have seen strange things—things which are contrary to appearance, and which therefore have upset our conception of things, and have altered our notions, so that we now attach honour to that which we formerly despised, and withhold honour from that which we formerly revered. We have seen strange—'paradoxical'—things to-day: things which have upset our old estimate of things, and which have cast a new light upon the possibilities as well as the significance of life. Up to this point we thought little or nothing of this man, and we thought everything of the Pharisees and scribes and the learned doctors of the law; but this hour has cast a lurid light upon the doctors, the scribes, and the Pharisees, and it has cast a pure light upon this Jesus of Nazareth. We see Him, and the meaning of His life as never before; life can never be the same to us again.'

¶ Once you have encountered Christ and seen Himself, life can never be the same thing to you as it was before. It must be either better or worse. Like the magnet brought near the rod after friction, He inevitably develops either a positive or a negative in you: He polarises your inner life. Christ has taught in your street, sat in your house, talked with your heart. 'We needs must love the highest when we see it.'[1]

3. That experience is worth getting. What did it do to these people?

(1) 'They were amazed.'—Astonishment is the condition of all progress. A man must be astonished before he can learn anything. That man who never can be moved, except by an earthquake, never learns much. That man who can look at Niagara, or any wonder in God's creation, without being surprised is a hopeless blockhead. It is the man who wonders who learns. For your own sake, for the sake of every possibility of advancement in life, do not assume that omniscience which is never surprised at anything. If you know anything of men, you will only despise that omniscient being who never expresses wonder at anything he sees or hears. Such people are to be found. Say anything to them, and they will

[1] M. A. B. Evans, *The Moonlight Sonata and Other Verses*, 118.

[1] R. E. Welsh, *Man to Man*, 208.

infallibly reply that they knew it all before. No wave of wonder passes over their soul: it is a stagnant pool down somewhere in the dark, the winds of heaven have never visited it; but a man who has a soul like the ocean can be moved into wonderment by every breeze of mystery that passes over it. The man who has sufficient delicacy of feeling, sensitiveness of nature, and response of soul, to say, 'Oh!' when he cannot understand is the man likely to learn. They were amazed. These were people who were in an attitude for learning.

¶ The Sense of Wonder is obviously nearest to that spirit of worship which is the first instinct of religion. Wherever we have the sense of wonder, in however gross a form, we have one of the germs of that spiritual insight which sees the world and the most 'everyday' fact in it bathed in that strange light which for some is never gone from sea or land. Anyone with the sense of wonder must be to some extent religious, must be emancipated in some measure from the dull materialism of his fellows.[1]

(2) 'They glorified God.'—Their wonder led them to a right conception of things. They naturally concluded that the healing was supernatural, and had come from God. They therefore glorified Him. Strangely enough, this word 'glorify' comes from the same root as the word 'strange'; one is the verb and the other is the adjective. Now they had withdrawn the honour and the praise from the doctors of the law, and ascribed it to God. But another had done this before. The young man was no sooner healed than 'he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God.' There is nothing so contagious as praise. Man catches the note of praise, or even an appeal set to music, when he fails to catch anything else. Here was a man, paralyzed and hopeless, restored to full vigour. As he carried his bed upon his shoulder he praised God, sang as he never sang before, and the multitude in astonishment caught the song—'They glorified God.'

(3) 'They were filled with fear,' or reverence. —The song expressed praise, but it also awakened reverence in the heart of those who presented it; and so men, by the surprisal of an hour, by the opening up of those rich resources of Divine grace and power which they had never known before, were brought reverently before God to realize that they knew but little of that which God had in store for man. They thus took their shoes from off their feet, for the place whereon they stood was holy.

The wonder of angels and the condemnation of men on the last judgment day will be that God has filled man's lives with surprisals of power and love, and yet they have never been awakened even to wonder, much less to praise, or subdued into reverence as the result. Next to the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, the greatest mystery is the mystery of iniquity that can be blind to every revelation of God, and set at nought every gracious act of mercy and love in God's world, as if there were no God and no salvation.

¶ All real joy and power of progress in humanity depends on finding something to reverence, and all the baseness and misery of humanity begin in a habit of disdain.[1]

[1] R. Le Gallienne, *The Religion of a Literary Man*, 87.

Levi.

Luke v. 28.—'And he left all, rose up, and followed him.'

Our Lord is wonderful by reason of His Divinity. He heals the sick, cleanses the leper, gives sight to the blind, and raises the dead. He is wonderful as teacher, incomparable both in His manner and in His message. He is wonderful as He stands in His kingly grandeur before Pilate and the people. But He is most wonderful of all in His care for, and companionship with, the sin-stained, the reprobate, and the outcast. Listen as He calls the weary and heavy-laden to come unto Him for rest. Watch His beautiful courtesy as He deals with sin-stained women. Behold Him in the homes of publicans and sinners. Listen to His words, spoken in the agony of death upon the Cross, to a thief. 'To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.' It is this yearning compassion that makes clear that His humanity is based upon Divinity.

It is this side of our Lord's life that is most emphasized by St. Luke. It is quite true that both St. Matthew and St. Mark also record the

[1] Ruskin.

call of Levi, the publican; but it is St. Luke who most constantly sets forth the Friend of publicans and sinners. St. Luke's Gospel is that of the compassionate Christ. Luke alone records the parable of the Prodigal Son, the saving of Zacchæus, the word spoken to the dying thief. In short, St. Luke gives to us a perfect picture of Him who saved the disreputable. How striking, in contrast, are the religionists, the scribes and Pharisees, who, in the pages of the Gospels, appear in conflict with Jesus. Compare His humility with their pride, His tenderness with their hate, His sincerity with their hypocrisy, and His glory appears to be still more wonderful.

We know nothing of the early history of Levi, who afterwards became St. Matthew. We infer that he had more than once listened to Jesus, and that the words he had heard had awakened within him new desires and longings after purity. Before there came the actual call a work of grace had been wrought in Levi's soul. Evidently our Lord knew this. He read the heart and judged not by outward circumstance or worldly occupation. The important thing to the Master was a man's possibility to become a disciple. Hence He saw in Levi, not a slavish earner of foreign bread, but one who yearned after God and newness of life.

Levi heard the voice of Jesus, 'Follow me.' He could not and would not resist that voice. At once he obeyed. His was not merely an emotional obedience; it was practical and genuine. And in order that his friends should know that the old life was past and that henceforward he was to follow the Galilean, he made a feast at which his newly-found Master was present, and there, in the presence of his friends, he publicly identified himself with his Lord. To the Pharisees, the two facts, that Jesus should have called a publican into His service, and that He should have joined in a feast at the publican's house, were enough to fill them with anger. They murmured, saying to the Master, 'Why do ye eat and drink with the publicans and sinners?' Back came the answer, 'They that are whole have no need of a physician; but they that are sick. I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.'

Notice the genuine character of Levi's conversion.

1. He turned his back upon the old life. By thus doing he demonstrated his penitence. Evidently the curse of that old life was a love of money. A love of money had led him to become a traitor to his nation, and was responsible for his sordid life. Without hesitation he turned his back on that life and followed the penniless and landless Prophet. He was willing to suffer hardship in order that he might find salvation. He is in striking contrast to the rich young ruler who came to Jesus, asking the question, 'Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life.' Our Lord saw that there was one thing he must do; that was to sell all that he had and give it to the poor. His great possessions were his curse. Near to the Kingdom, he failed to enter, for those great possessions were the passion of his life. He might have been poor, yet happy, but through his own folly he remained wealthy, and went away from Jesus sorrowful. Levi was not guilty of the same folly. There and then he left all and followed Christ.

For he who follows Christ must not respect
Promotion, money, glory, ease, delight;
But poverty, reproof, and self-neglect,
Disgrace, tears, hunger, cold, thirst, scorn, despite;
Friends, father, mother, brethren, children, wife,
Must be forgone, yea, lands and goods and life.[1]

2. Levi promptly identified himself with Jesus. He 'made a great feast in his house,' and there publicly proclaimed his conversion. He is in welcome contrast to Nicodemus, who came to Jesus by night, silently, secretly, and fearfully. Levi wished that all the world might know his new-found Lord. That which is most to be admired is his desire that his business associates should learn of his new life. It is easy in the private circle of your home to make known your religious convictions. It is hard in the circle in which you make your daily bread. The public confession of Christ is the solemn duty of the disciple. 'Ye are my witnesses,' He said. To the witness-bearer He grants eternal blessing. 'Everyone who shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denieth me in the presence of men shall be denied in the presence of the angels of God.'

[1] I. F.

¶ Spiritual work among soldiers is very real and deep. I question whether there is any more difficult place for a man to endeavour to live up to his convictions than in the Army; and to the Christian soldier, one of the surest tests of the reality of his religious profession is the simple matter of saying his prayers in the barrack room or tent. If a man persistently does that, you may be sure there is something real in his profession.[1]

3. Levi, the publican, becomes Matthew, the apostle. The despised sinner is transformed into a saint. In the building of the Church our Lord used moral rubbish. A publican like Levi, a traitor like Peter, are at its very foundations. And always our Lord transforms those who submit themselves to Him. The slag cast out from a furnace as useless waste forms into masses of radiating crystals; from tar and pitch the loveliest colours may be manufactured: and the very mud trampled under foot may be changed by chemical art into gems of surpassing beauty. So, worthless moral rubbish may become jewels fit for the Redeemer's crown. The Master never fails. If any man is in Christ he is a new creation.

¶ Man is compelled, in his material constructions, to approach his work from without; but the Creator, with the gift of Life at His disposal, is able to approach His material from within. His vital work is ever from within outwards, by a process of development of life. A statue is made by skilful mechanical subtraction, as a picture is made by skilful mechanical addition, guided by an idea brought to bear on the marble and canvas *from without*. A man and a flower are also mechanically constructed, and the construction is similarly guided by an idea; but the idea is brought to the material *from within*. The substance is developed by an inner vital force in which the Creator's Mind—His idea of man or flower—inheres.

No wonder, then, in the Divine work of the making of a 'new man' the process should be neither accretion nor subtraction, but *regeneration*, and the great saying should meet us—'Ye must be *born* again.[2]

[1] E. J. Kennedy, *With the Immortal Seventh Division*, 188.

[2] *The Lamp of Fellowship*: Selections from the Writings of Medley of Rawdon, 60.

Following.

Luke v. 27, 28.—'He said unto him, Follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed him.'

Most of us need, almost more than anything else, to come to close quarters with some of the familiar truths of our religion. We should be very sorry to be told that we are not followers of Christ, and yet it may well be that we have never really asked ourselves what following Him means or ought to mean. It is so easy to be satisfied with the mere phrase, and to accept the conventional minimum as all that can be required. For this reason, if for no other, we ought to ask ourselves still in what sense these words spoken to Levi can be addressed to us—'Follow me.'

1. First, then, Christ's aim was to attach men to Himself, and the bond was to be one of personal devotion and affection. Therefore He said to men, not simply, 'Keep my words . . . hear my sayings . . . do my commands,' but 'Come unto me . . . I am the way . . . believe in me . . . follow me.' As has been well said, this stress laid upon Himself was with Jesus not egotism but Deity. It was just because He was not as other teachers are that He did not teach as they do. And the 'something more' in Him was Himself. Of course the personality of any teacher is the largest factor in his life and work. What you are is quite as important in helping you to teach men as what you have learned. It is better to know that a boy loves his teacher than to know that the teacher has all the letters of the alphabet after his name. Now, it was not that Jesus Christ had not a very definite body of doctrine to teach men. The point is rather that He had a very remarkable knowledge of human nature, and He clearly understood that before He could teach men His law or His doctrine He must win them unto Himself. And so the driving force in His religion is to be found not in its abstract truth, but in the Person of its Founder. As He said Himself with sublime assurance: 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself.' In other words, Christianity is Christ. It is by love and devotion to Him that Christians have been distinguished from the beginning. This has been the source of their courage, of their patience, of their inspiration.

¶ If there has been one change which above all others has altered our modern Christianity from what the Christian religion was in apostolic times, I think beyond all doubt it must be this, the substitution of a belief in doctrines for loyalty to a person as the essence and the test of Christian life. And if there be a revival which is needed to make Christianity strong against the enemies which beset her, and clear in the sight of the multitudes who are bewildered about her, it certainly must be the recoronation of her personal idea, the reassertion of the fact that Christ is Christianity, and that not to hold that this or that concerning Him is true, but to follow Him with love and with that degree of knowledge of Him which has been given us, is to be a Christian. Personality is the only power in which mystery can become real and vital and practical. You describe thought, love, hope, fear, life itself, and men are all bewildered. You set a living, loving, thinking, hoping, fearing man before them, and, without the loss of one particle of the mystery which your abstractions tried to describe, the emotion, the condition, the being is instantly real and realized.[1]

2. So much for the mere theory of this injunction. But we must understand also that it has its very practical side. In spite of all changes in circumstances and conditions, its essential consequences are the same for us as they were for the Twelve. And it is by understanding what the command involved for them that we shall best be able to realize what it may involve for us.

For one thing, these men became pupils of Jesus Christ. Like all Oriental teachers, Christ's first object was to found a school. Wiser in their generation than we, the Rabbis were not content to write books for posterity; they preferred to utter their teaching to living phonographs, that from the mouths and by the lives of men others might learn what they were and what they taught. And Jesus called men to follow Him that He might do the same with them. For three years they lived with Him in closest intimacy. They listened to His public discourses and to His table-talk. They watched His actions and studied the methods of His work. Though they were men of simple rugged natures He was able to mould them according to His desire; and though they all developed in very different ways, and none of them reached the ideal He set before them, they all ever afterwards bore branded on their minds and characters the marks of the Lord Jesus.

So for us, too, discipleship means pupilage. If you call yourself a Christian this means that you have entered the school of Jesus Christ; you cannot escape the obligation of taking His yoke upon you and learning of Him. It is quite true, of course, that this does not sum up the whole of the relationship. You were attracted first of all not by the teacher in Jesus, but by the Saviour. He gives to you something more than a new wisdom; He gives a new life. But this life has to be lived. Jesus has not done with a man when He has given him forgiveness and a blessed assurance of salvation from sin. It is only the first step in a long process, and the next is that the man so saved goes to school with His Saviour. For he is saved not for himself alone. It is a most grievous perversion of the work of Jesus to make it begin and end in the soul of the individual. He takes far wider views than this; in His eyes every saved man becomes a possible saviour of others. In His work there is a deep moral purpose which concerns not merely the individual but the community. And it was this that distinguished His doctrine from that of the recognized teachers of the day. In the teaching of Jesus were life, elasticity, poetry. Its aim was to make men. The teaching of the Rabbis was dead, wooden, and could make only pedants. What Jesus lays stress upon are such points as these: the Fatherhood of God over the human family; His perpetual and beneficent providence for all His children; the excellence of simple trust in God over the earthly care of this world; the obligation of God's children to be like their Father in Heaven; the paramount importance of true and holy motives; the worthlessness of a merely formal righteousness; the inestimable value of heart-righteousness; the forgiveness of sins dependent on our forgiving our neighbours; the fulfilling of the law of love; and the play of the tender and passive virtues.

(1) There are two points, at least, which distinguished the teaching of Jesus, which His followers need specially to mark. One is His relentless demand for absolute sincerity of thought, word, and deed. In the Christian life there is

[1] Phillips Brooks, *Essays and Addresess*, 73.

no room for double dealing of any kind. Its supreme qualifications are purity of heart and singleness of eye, a hatred of hypocrisy, and a deep disdain for all outward show and observance that does not accurately correspond with inward feeling and aim.

(2) And another point is Christ's exaltation of the passive virtues of meekness and humility. 'The Lord's servant must not strive, but be gentle towards all, apt to teach, in meekness instructing them that oppose themselves.' This ideal is neither easy nor popular, and yet it is certain that without some strenuous and habitual effort to attain it there can be no true following of Jesus Christ.

3. But, once again, to follow Christ is not only to become His pupil in the realm of moral character and spiritual life; it is also to be His servant, or, as St. Paul loved to phrase it, His slave. The first disciples were servants as well as pupils. They were called to follow their Master that they might help Him—might teach, preach, and heal in His name, and, after He should have returned to His Father, might carry on His work. And Christians to-day do not shrink from accepting this description as true of themselves. They admit that they are to be in the world as Christ was; that they have received a solemn charge of service at His hands; and that if they are to be true followers of Him they must be ministers and slaves. This means that they will not shrink from the most unreserved surrender of themselves to the Master's will. In spite of the clashing claims, duties and interests of this present life, they will keep this high aim steadily before them, and be conspicuous amid the eddying crowd as those who have a dominant and overmastering purpose in their lives. They will realize that for the Christian his religion is a matter, not merely of being, but of doing—that they are themselves called of God to a certain definite task, and that they have to accomplish their task while it is called to-day. The work of Jesus Christ with His followers is not merely their moral and spiritual up-building; it is the making of them fellow-labourers with God. And in so serving Him they come to serve man. Their worship of Him is not to evaporate in ecstasies of praise, or even in empty and often selfish imitation of Christ. He has left with His followers the vast mass of men and women made in His image, and these they have to minister unto in His stead.

For we must not forget that the new law is one of love. And it is not until we can be said to love men as Christ did that we can serve aright. What we want is not the discharge of certain conventional duties towards our neighbour, but the spirit of service—to love our neighbours as ourselves. We all admit that Jesus loved men if ever anyone did. But His love was not mere pity: it sprang out of His just and tender estimate of what men were and were worth. We can all of us pity the miserable; but our pity is often only a kind of reversed selfishness, springing from the uneasy feeling which the woes of others are apt to excite in our breasts. But the love of Jesus was of a very different kind. He yearned over men with a strange and wonderful compassion. He saw them in the light of that Sonship of God which they had forfeited, and in the light of that Divine Image which they had marred. The contrast between what they were and what they might be constrained Him to lavish upon them all His care. So the task which He left to His followers was the saving of lost men. He took the love which they bore Him, and sought to transfer it to those for whom He died. 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these ye have done it unto me.' And we are no true followers of Him until there has been kindled in our breasts a love like His for men. We have to see them with His eyes, to understand as He did the tragedy of their sin, to read His meaning into that terrible word 'lost,' to spend ourselves for others with the self-abandonment which He showed. Such uncalculating love is the rarest and most beautiful of the gifts of God. We need it in order to transfigure our easy-going and self-centred lives. Without this wedding garment of love we shall never be accepted as His followers, and our souls will stand naked and ashamed before the Son of Man.

> Who seeks for heaven alone to save his soul,
> May keep the path but will not reach the goal;
> While he who walks in love may wander far
> Yet God will bring him where the blessed are.

¶ The life of Father Dolling is the life of an

Apostle. Never have we read the history of a man more consecrated to God and to abandoned souls. He was an Anglican, but so Christ-like were his interior life and his external labours that we hesitate not to call him a very prince in that communion of just souls which is the invisible kingdom of God's Holy Spirit. For almost twenty years he worked in the slums of Portsmouth and London. Despising conventionalities, irritated with officialism, but all absorbed in real tenderness, he gave himself, body and mind and heart and soul, to the salvation of little children, the reformation of the criminal, the reclaiming of the outcast. Every day at his table from ten to forty of the poor and the unfortunate broke bread with him, and in this 'sacrament of a common meal,' as his striking phrase is, took heart of hope from his inspiring presence, his paternal kindness. Until he could preach no more, until his toil-broken body lay down in final rest, he begged and sweated for his poor. God give him sweet repose! No man whose vocation is to work for souls can read of his glorious life without feeling lifted up to purer love for the world's Redeemer and to more vehement zeal for those unhappy multitudes who know not yet what it is to have been redeemed.[1]

4. Once more, there is a sense in which Jesus Christ is a very exacting Master. He can brook no rival in the hearts of His followers; He must reign there supreme. And so we read that Levi, when he was called, 'rose up and left all and followed him.' And this is quite in the natural order of things. A service and a devotion so engrossing as that of the Christian to Christ must naturally mean a good deal of self-denial. To turn our faces to Him is to turn our backs on all else. He must come first. True, He does not call all His followers to abandon their business and homes and become missionaries of His word. Matthew might have continued a publican as Zacchæus did, but he would have been a very different publican from what he was before. The aim and standpoint of his life were now altered, and he could no longer seek simply his own interests and be careless of the means he used to attain them. So we may continue our work in this world after we have listened to the call of Jesus Christ, but if we are true followers of Him it will be with a difference. We shall have broken absolutely with the accepted ideas and aims of this present world; we shall make it clear by our whole action and demeanour that we use all that it can give us or do for us simply as the means to a higher end.

The history of Christendom can supply countless instances of self-surrender and self-renunciation, absolute, entire, and complete. We dwell with satisfaction upon the perfect response rendered by men like St. Augustine, St. Francis of Assisi, and the noble-hearted Xavier, to the call of the Master. We believe that in later days the spirit that lived in the hearts of these great sons of the Cross, warmed the energies of Martyn and Selwyn, Livingstone and Mackenzie. We forget, alas! that if we could read the record of many a wasted life, we should find that there were moments when the call was made and the voice heard, but a distinct preference for the lower gratifications of earth soon became evident. The ordinary course of lives surrounded by privilege and blessing might seem to indicate that in the common and free ministrations of grace to the soul, calls from the Divine Master came and went. But there is more than this. All thoughtful persons who deal truly with their own souls are often aware that there arises in the course of life occasions which call forth the highest powers of the human spirit. At such a time life as it really is is absolutely revealed to the soul. The habits and traditions of Christian society become invested with their proper dignity. The question of questions is plainly manifest, and it becomes possible, in short, for him whose understanding is thus enlightened, to decide once and for ever which of two paths he shall take; the one that leads across the mountain, or that which lies in a land of fruitful ease. Dull indeed must he be who has not known, sooner or later, something of the loss or gain which comes from such a decision. Surely it is not too much to say that, however the choice was made, the Master has at such a moment called on the disciple to follow.

When you have started forth towards your vision,
When you have counted up the gain and cost,
When you have faced the old, old world's derision,
Its scoffing tale of all endeavours lost;

[1] *Catholic World*, New York, Feb. 1903.

When all is said, leave it the sane, wise clinging
To proven ways you never can recall;
It has not heard your golden trumpet ringing . . .
O Pioneer, the end is worth it all.

In Society.

Luke v. 29.—'And Levi made him a great feast in his own house; and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them.'

So Christ went into society. We may go into society also.

1. For the Christian way of life is a social way; that is why the Christian man goes into society. Christianity regards man not as a concourse of atoms, not as a dissected corpse with its limbs and members lying about in some surgeon's room, but as a body united together by one spirit, knit—to use our familiar technical language—knit together in one communion and fellowship.

(1) So the Christian man is not only not afraid of society, but loves it. The Christian man—not always, because all are not called to it, but most frequently—the Christian man becomes what is called a family man, and a family man is he who embarks on the first experiment in socialism in society. The family is the beginning of all society. It is a part, a rehearsal, a kind of practice for the larger life of the world, or something wider than is comprised within the four walls of a house. And the Christian man is often—not always, but often—not afraid therefore to surround himself with a family. He believes that it is not inconsistent with Christian doctrine to do so. He believes that God will bless his family life to him, teach him something through his wife and through his children. He believes that he will discover by experience what the reality and meaning of words like 'love' are. Family life is the beginning of society, and in it the Christian man starts his experiments.

(2) But he goes out into society in the larger and wider sense. Let us try to accompany him again as he makes that experiment. What a wonderful scene he discovers as he goes out, this Christian man, into society. What extraordinary endeavours and efforts he finds that his fellow-men are making in order to obtain society. He finds the smart set and the Bohemian or unsmart set. He finds in some places frivolous sets, in others solemn sets, people who get together on a basis of frivolity or who get together on a basis of solemnity. He finds learned clubs and sporting clubs, he finds wine clubs and water clubs, High Church society, Low Church society, Broad Church society, and No Church society, clubs for fellowship of secularists or agnostics. All these and many other forms and endeavours at society does he find in existence. Indeed, if we were to try to make a catalogue and list of all the endeavours which people have made at society it would be interminable work.

2. Now, what is the Christian man to do as he goes out? How is he to behave? What forms of society shall he seek? What contribution has he to make to this endeavour of mankind after society? What has he specifically to add to those experiments? How can he forward the search? Well, there was once a very eminent Christian man who embarked upon the enormous enterprise of being catholic-minded, of making himself, or being made by the holy spirit, 'all things to all men,' as he expresses it. He went out into society, and he went out in that spirit and with that aim, to be catholic-minded really and become all things to all men; to understand all men whom he met as far as he could; to sympathize with them by entering into their difficulties, their temptations, their aspirations, their perplexities, their distresses; to hold communion with them, sometimes in the great Temple at Jerusalem, sometimes on the seashore, sometimes in a tent, sometimes in a school, sometimes in the synagogue, sometimes on board ship, sometimes in the desert, and often—very often—in different houses where men congregated together. He was a Christian man, and he made that great experiment of the Christian man—he tried to be catholic-minded. And the wonder is that he succeeded. He succeeded because he knew that his Master had succeeded before him, and he was but trying to carry out the precept and follow the example of his Master in fulfilling this great endeavour to be a catholic-minded and a catholic-hearted man.

(1) But what is a catholic-minded man? Well, first of all, he is not a man who belongs to all parties and waters them down in his own thought and mind, so that there is a kind of

milk-and-water residuum which nobody would recognize. Neither is he a man who belongs to no party. He finds himself in a world where the party principle is all about him, and where mankind is too disorganized and feeble and weak in its endowment and in its brains to do without it. He finds men organizing themselves into many different parties, and the catholic-minded man has to choose which party he will ally himself with for certain great ends and purposes that he may have in his mind. But the difference between the falsely so-called catholic-minded man and the really catholic-minded man is just this, that the latter never mistakes his own party for the Catholic Church of Christ. He never allows himself to shrink and become contracted in mind and in heart so as to think that some minor society, some temporary instrument that has been formed for certain purposes, is the same thing as *the* society of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is His society, and which is nothing smaller than the Catholic Church itself. So the first mark of the Christian man in society is that he is very large-minded, catholic-minded.

¶ The largest man is the man who knows most about Christ and does His will most perfectly. The Christian ought to be the largest-minded man in the world. Jesus never shuts a man up within a little space and says, 'That will do for you.' Jesus never contracts a man's intellect; Jesus never looks with contempt upon a man's service. He calls men from the little to the great, from the local to the universal, from the kingdom of Israel to the whole globe.[1]

(2) The second mark is that he is large-hearted and catholic-hearted. He is not afraid of mixing with all sorts and conditions of men. He does not think himself exalted if he mixes with people who in the worldly scale are considered above himself, and he does not consider himself at all lowered or degraded if he mixes with people who in the worldly scale—not his scale—are lower than himself. He is patient of bad accents; he is patient of awkward manners and of unfashionable clothes. He does not admire them, but he is patient of them. He feels about them as the Apostle felt about slavery and liberty. He thinks it better to escape from bad accents and awkward manners and unfashionable clothes if he can, but he does not think that faulty accents, or awkward manners, or unfashionable clothes are quite the same thing as hell and damnation. He is large-minded and large-hearted, and that is why people love him so, and that is why, when he has to say good-bye to some to whom he has ministered, and stands on the seashore before he goes on the ship, and takes his leave, they fall on his neck and weep for him, because they had not known anybody like that before. They had met narrow-minded people and little-minded people, but it was indeed happiness to come into the presence of a really Christian man, who knew how to behave with such a large heart and a large mind, and who was at home among all sorts and conditions of men.

¶ Father William Flete was an Englishman, who, passing through Italy in his youth, became fascinated with the land, and spent the rest of his life in a hermit's cell in the Forest of Lecceto. The annals of the time throw some entertaining sidelights on his figure. Famous for his austerities and for the sanctity of his life, he was also a very impatient and somewhat intolerant person given to carping criticism of his brother hermits. Catherine, in writing to him, analyses mercilessly the dangers of the ascetic life; one feels that not much self-righteousness could be left in a man after reading her trenchant phrases. Soon, however, she lifts him with her to the ardent contemplation of the perfect life; it is in words of singular beauty that she describes the attitude of generous loving-kindness, uncritical, humble and glad, with which the true servant of God considers all sorts and conditions of men: 'Such a man rejoices in every type that he sees, saying: Thanks be to Thee, Eternal Father, that Thou hast many mansions in Thy house. . . . He rejoices more in the differences among men than he would in seeing them all walk in the same way; for so he sees more manifest the greatness of the goodness of God. He gets from everything the fragrance of roses.'[1]

[1] Joseph Parker.

[1] Vida D. Scudder, *Letters of Saint Catherine of Siena*, 57.

THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE SINNERS.

Luke v. 32.—'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.'

Matt. xviii. 3—'Except ye be converted (RV 'turn') and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.'

WHEN Jesus began His public ministry He found the people divided into two classes. The one class was called 'the righteous,' the other 'the sinners.' The distinction between the two classes was clearly recognized by both. The righteous persons knew that they were righteous, and the sinners admitted that they were sinners.

It does not seem to be possible now to discover the origin of this cleavage, or to trace its history. There are those who would go back to Ezra and the return from the Captivity. But that is a precarious proceeding. No doubt a division into two classes did take place then, but the division was not the same as Christ found in His environment. And in any case no connexion between them can be traced historically.

Nor can we with any confidence carry the cleavage down into the subsequent centuries. It it true that the Talmud has much to say of a sinner class, which it calls *am ha-aretz,* the people of the land. But it does not correspond with the sinner class of our Lord's day. Mr. Claude G. Montefiore, who has gone into the matter carefully in the Introduction to his edition of *The Synoptic Gospels,* says: 'The Talmudic passages about the *am ha-aretz* are obscure, and their meaning is disputed. They were written down long after the age of Jesus, and many of them seem to refer to a period after His death. The features which characterize the Talmudic *am ha-aretz* do not appear to be the same as those which characterize the Gospel "sinners" or "multitudes." It is therefore unsafe to use the passages in the Talmud in illustration or confirmation of the passages in the Gospels.'

And it is not necessary. What we have to do with is the fact that in the time of Christ a separation into two classes prevailed. The Gospels are enough to tell us that, and no one denies it. Mr. Montefiore denies that the righteous class is fairly presented to us in the Gospels. He thinks that it could not have been so objectionable as the Evangelists say. But he does not deny that on the one side were the Rabbis and Pharisees and on the other the so-called 'sinners,' whom the Rabbis and Pharisees made little or no effort to reclaim or convert.

Although we cannot discover the origin or trace the history of this division among the people, we see clearly enough what the test was. It was knowledge of the Law. Now the Law of Moses was difficult enough of itself, but the lawyers of the nation had surrounded it with such a multiplicity of safeguards that for the bulk of the people a thorough knowledge of the Law was simply hopeless. The righteous persons accordingly were the scribes and lawyers. But theoretically all those who were associated prominently with the worship of the synagogues were reckoned of the righteous, however imperfect their acquaintance with the tradition of the elders might be. In short, anyone was accepted as a righteous person who made a righteous person's claim, the name given to such a person being Pharisee. And of course the priests who ministered in the Temple at Jerusalem, although they stood apart from the Pharisees in certain of their beliefs and aims, and were called Sadducees, belonged also to the righteous class. The rest were sinners. And on them the righteous verdict was 'This people which knoweth not the law is cursed.'

This division into righteous and sinners was the determining factor in the ministry of Jesus. He did not create it, but He could not ignore it. He did not try to ignore it. On the contrary He made it prominent both in what He did and in what He said. And we miss the point of much of His conduct and much of His teaching unless we keep it prominently and persistently before our minds.

He resolved to ignore the righteous. Surveying the purpose for which He had been sent into the world, He perceived that it was with the sinners only that He had to do. They were lost. 'The Son of man is come,' He said, 'to seek and to save that which was lost.' The righteous were not lost; they were all right. And so:

'They that are whole,' He said, 'have no need of a physician; but they that are sick.' And then, with perfect plainness of speech, He added, 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.'

We do not know in what proportion the sinners stood to the righteous. Mr. Montefiore has persuaded himself that 'only a small section of persons were outside the ranks of the "respectable" persons that observed the law.' That is most improbable, and quite contrary to the impression which the Gospels leave. He is misleading himself by using the word 'respectable.' A man or woman might be very well-to-do and be a sinner. The publicans were often wealthy, and could hold their own for respectability, yet they were always classed with the sinners, simply because they were tax-gatherers. All the indications point to the great mass of the people being reckoned sinners, so that our Lord gave Himself to work among 'the people,' and the people received Him gladly.

But the righteous would not leave Him alone at His work among the sinners. It was not that they felt they were neglected by Him. They believed that they had no need of a physician and they did not expect the physician to visit them. And certainly it was not that they objected to another doing what they were too indolent to do themselves. The offence was deeper than that. The very idea of 'reclaiming the lost' was intolerable. For there was one way of being right with God and one only—the keeping of the Law. A man who did not know the Law was beyond the possibility of salvation. If Jesus had been a fanatic they might have overlooked His fanaticism. What they could not overlook was His wickedness.

And so, wherever He went, they followed. They interfered with His ministry. They kept the sinners from coming to Him. They loudly complained when He went to them. 'This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them.' And so it came to pass that, willing or unwilling, He had to deal with the righteous as well as the sinners. He had to speak to those who considered themselves righteous and despised others. He had to tell parables to the scribes and Pharisees. He told the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. The publican was wrong and knew it: 'God be merciful to me the sinner.' The Pharisee was wrong also, but did not know it: 'God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are.' And after the prayer, after the repentance, the *sinner* 'went down to his house justified rather than the other.'

He told the parable of the Prodigal Son. That parable shows us the two classes clearly. The younger son is one of 'the sinners,' the elder is one of 'the righteous.' The sinner does wrong and comes to know it. His righteous brother is wrong and does not see it. But we see it. We see with quite astonishing clearness that though he has served his father 'these many years' and never has transgressed a commandment, yet he is all wrong.

He is not at one with his father, and never has been. He has been a servant, not a son. It all comes out when the younger son returns. The father welcomes him, the brother resents the welcome. He has no joy at his brother's return, as he had probably no sorrow at his departure: 'He has made his bed, let him lie on't.' The father loves the prodigal, has loved him all along and looked for his return. The elder son has no love for either brother or father. To do right he must be right, and to be right he must be right with his father.

The father is God. The sinners and the righteous are both out of harmony with God. They do not see things as God sees them, and therefore they do not do things as God would do them. But there is a difference. It is quite startling to find Christ setting the sinners before the righteous as He does. But the reason is that the spirit of the sinners was often right though their deeds were wrong, while the deeds of the righteous were often right though their spirit was wrong. And it is worse to be wrong in spirit than in deed.

Jesus made this clear in the parable of the Two Sons. The father came to one of the sons and said, 'Go, work to-day in my vineyard.' He said, 'I go, sir'; but went not. He came to the other. He refused to go, but went. The one was outwardly obedient, but inwardly rebellious. The other was outwardly rebellious but inwardly obedient. It was the inwardly obedient son that did the will of his father.

Now, when Jesus dealt with these two classes,

He dealt with them both alike. To both He said that they must begin again. In the case of the sinners that was comparatively easy, for all that they had to do was to repent of their sinfulness. In the case of the righteous it was very difficult. For them also, however, there was nothing else for it; they must begin again. They must get right with God first. Then they would be able to do right.

How were they to get right with God? Jesus explained how. Take the case of Nicodemus. He came to Jesus by night to see if there was any omission in his righteous observance of the Mosaic Law. Like that other ruler, and apparently younger man, he had kept all these things from his youth up—*what lacked he yet?* Jesus answered, and said unto him, 'Except a man *be born again,* he cannot see the kingdom of God.' It is not something lacking; it is everything wrong. He had been building up a house of outward observance—a new Tower of Babel, to reach to heaven before he died, and he was told that it had all to come down. He had been living a life of righteous merit without the spirit that makes the motive right. He was told that he must be born again.

Were the disciples righteous or sinners? It really does not matter. The necessity of being born again is on both. This is the necessity which our Lord laid upon them, though the words are a little different in St. Matthew. He said they must be converted—they must convert, turn about, as the true translation is—and become as little children. He told them, as He told Nicodemus, that they had to begin at the very beginning.

This, then, is the first characteristic of the Child of the Kingdom. He is a beginner. He is a child.

He is not a child physically. Ruskin has settled that. 'Not of children themselves,' he says, 'but of such as children. I believe most mothers who read that text think that all heaven, or the earth—when it gets to be like heaven—is to be full of babies. But that's not so. "Length of days and long life and peace," that is the blessing; not to die, still less to live, in babyhood.'

And he is not a child mentally. St. Paul has settled that. 'When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things' (1 Cor. xiii. 11). St. Paul, interpreted by Canon Scott Holland, has settled it: 'Childhood foresees infinite possibilities, and refuses to limit its aims, and is endlessly irrational, and incalculable, and wilful, and arbitrary, and sudden, and abrupt, and freakish, and whimsical. It surrenders itself to fancies and feelings; and it requires a wide area in which to disport, with abundance of opportunities.'

No, the Child of the Kingdom is not a child physically or mentally. He is a child spiritually. He is 'born of the Spirit.' Not that the Spirit of God is more available now than when he was born of the flesh, but that *he* is more responsive. It is not the child, whether as it is or as it ought to be, that is greatest in the Kingdom, it is he who responds most utterly to the approach of the Spirit of God, surrendering the old life with its sin and its righteousness and beginning anew.

Surrendering the old life—in that lies the difficulty. And it is more difficult for the righteous than for the sinners. 'The publicans and harlots enter the kingdom of heaven before you.' Nor was it ever more difficult than now. For never was righteousness more truly righteous, never respectability more respectable. So subtle has self-righteousness (for it *is* self-righteousness) grown that we cannot believe the Pharisees of our Lord's condemnation to have been so Pharisaical. But we have to give it all up and begin again.

'There is a state of mind,' says William James, 'known to religious men, but to no others, in which the will to assert ourselves and hold our own has been displaced by a willingness to close our mouths and be as nothing in the floods and water-spouts of God. In this state of mind, what we most dreaded has become the habitation of our safety, and the hour of our moral death has turned into our spiritual birthday. The time for tension in our soul is over, and that of happy relaxation, of calm deep breathing, of an eternal present, with no discordant future to be anxious about, has arrived. Fear is not held in abeyance as it is by mere morality, it is positively expunged and washed away.'

Surrender—that is the first of the characteristics of the Child of the Kingdom of Heaven. If he

has been a sinner and acknowledges it, the surrender will be called repentance, and it will be followed by restitution—'If I have taken anything from any man.' If he has been a sinner and does not acknowledge it, the surrender will still be called repentance. In the one case it is the surrender of open and acknowledged sin; in the other of open righteousness, with the acknowledgment of sin also at the last, and again with restitution—'Ye devour widows' houses.'

Then will appear some of the characteristics of the little child, the very characteristics which make the child so charming. And first of all simple, affectionate *Trust*.

'For, if you will think of it,'—this is Rainy, and at his very best—'what mainly makes the grace of childhood? Is it not this, that the child being set in a world of persons and forces, far stronger than itself—beyond its grasp and reach—to which notwithstanding in the very roots of its being it is related—this being so, all is happily adjusted by the presence of great and strong affections, which bring everything into sympathy and rest, into happy and hopeful life? But, is not that just *Christianity?—we* find ourselves in a world how great, high, far reaching—in which wonderful affections on God's side and, through His grace, on ours come in to bless us? It is so; but how truly we hardly guess. In this direction Christianity has secrets we have but partially found out as yet. Let this be believed. Some know much, perhaps, of the dust and toil of conflict; of the weariness of the way, in the great enterprise of walking with God; of the pain of loss; but when we are fighting and burdened, what is it about after all? Is it not about realizing Christ in His grace and help; is it not about retaining faith and hope and love? But in holding on to these it is the child nature and the child destiny we are holding on to—not that which has passed away, but that which is coming, that happiness and freedom the secret and security of which are God Himself.'

Next, *Receptiveness*—the receptiveness of the unspoilt child. How receptive children are, 'how ready to receive, to take quickly with open hand whatever you have to give, never fancying they must give something in return. People grow away from that. "I take nothing that I don't pay for; I'm obliged to nobody; I give as much as I get and keep square accounts."' We have to return from that. We have to begin again.

And then *Obedience*—the readiness to do as well as the willingness to receive. Archbishop Temple tells us that 'it is natural and easy to a child to obey.' He must have known only Ruskin's 'well-bred child.' The ready obedience of the well-bred child is as charming as any characteristic that childhood offers us. But 'it will be obvious,' says Dr. F. R. Tennant, 'that the sin which is most likely to beset the child most importunately at the commencement of its moral life must be disobedience.' And Professor Sully tells us why: 'He is full of fun, bent on his harmless tricks. He has a number of inconvenient, active impulses, such as putting things in disorder, playing with water, and so forth. As we all know, he has a duck-like fondness for dirty puddles. Civilization, which wills that a child should be nicely dressed and clean, intervenes in the shape of the nurse and soon puts a stop to this mode of diversion. The tyro in submission, if sound in brain and limb, kicks against the restraint, yells, slaps the nurse, and so forth.'

But the Child of the Kingdom is a well-bred child; he has learned obedience. Like the Saviour Himself he learns it by the things which he suffers. How often has he to say, 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine be done.' Whereupon he is well on the way to bring forth, not the characteristics which give the charm to the little child, but the fruits of the Spirit, which make the charm of the Child of the Kingdom. For the fruits of the Spirit are these—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance.

Nevertheless, it is not to be denied, rather is it gladly to be acknowledged, that in those who are most manifestly bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit there often remains a certain childlikeness, which is truly attractive and truly consistent with Christian manhood. Sir James G. Frazer, in relaxation from the writing of books about the 'Golden Bough' once visited Coverley Hall, the residence of Addison's Sir Roger de Coverley. Searching in the archives of the Spectator Club, he came upon some manuscripts which *The Spectator* had either rejected or perhaps kept by him on the chance of their serving as stop-gaps when he

had nothing better to offer for the entertainment of the day, and selected four for publication. And this is what we read of Sir Roger in one of them: 'The longer I stay at the Hall, the more I love its master. For there is about him a sweet simplicity, a sort of childlike frankness and innocence, which wonderfully pleases me and puts me many times in mind of Our Saviour's words, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' I think I never met one who seemed to me to need less preparation for death and for that communion with the spirits of the just made perfect to which Scripture teaches us to look forward as a principal source of the happiness that awaits us in the life hereafter. Not that Sir Roger is either very wise or very witty; for in truth he is neither, unless, as I am sometimes prone to think, the greatest wisdom consists in the greatest purity of the heart, for judged by that standard I would be bold to match Sir Roger against Socrates or any sage in history.'

Perhaps Sir Roger de Coverley is not wise enough for our purpose. Take a wise man, then. Take the successful Headmaster of a great Public School, Dr. Edward Carus Selwyn. In his biography we read: 'There was always in him something of the child. It showed itself in his fun, his simplicity, his ready appreciation of things and people. And all this was the more marked and the more charming in one of his intellectual distinction and with his always stimulating though often combative or provocative ideas. Truly a most lovable man, who had never lost the freshness and unexpectedness of a child.'

Finally we will remember that Elizabeth Barrett Browning made it her prayer—the most ambitious prayer she could put into poetry—that the newly born child might retain its childhood to the end:

Therefore no song of mine—
But prayer in place of singing; prayer that would
Commend thee to the new-creating God,
Whose gift is childhood's heart without its stain
Of weakness, ignorance, and changing vain—
That gift of God be thine!

So wilt thou aye be young,
In lovelier childhood than thy shining brow
And pretty winning accents make thee now.
Yea, sweeter than this scarce articulate sound
(How sweet!) of 'Father,' 'Mother,' shall be found
The ABBA on thy tongue.

And so, as years shall chase
Each other's shadows, thou wilt less resemble
Thy fellows of the earth who toil and tremble,
Than him thou seest not, thine angel bold
Yet meek, whose ever-lifted eyes behold
The Ever-loving's face.

The Old and the New.

Luke v. 39.—'No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new; for he saith, The old is better' (RV 'is good').

1. Is the man right or wrong in so pronouncing? He is right in the superficial sense, wrong in the deeper truth—so our Lord seems to say. He is right in declaring that, as things stand at the moment, the new wine is raw and tart and disagreeable; it has not the tone, the fragrance, the delicacy of the old; it has not become quiet and mellow, it has not adapted itself to the habit of the palate; it repels the man who is accustomed to the more subtle and smooth taste; he cannot like it. The old is in a better condition than the new, that is why he prefers it.

But he is making a false comparison all the time. He is forgetting that the mellow wine he likes was once raw, and the raw wine that he refuses will some day become mellow; and the real question is, will it, when it will have gained its mellowness, be a better wine or not? The worse wine, yet mellow, may be pleasanter than a better wine in its rawness, but it is a worse wine for all that, and the thing to discover is what lies behind the rough crude stuff in the violence of fermentation. It may be that the very violence of ferment which now repels is the sign of a fuller force, and makes for a richer ripeness. The slackness of the man who is content with the evidence of the present unpleasantness in contrast with the tone and flavour of the older wine, may hide from him the real fact that the new is indeed better.

How human, how kindly, is this parable of the Lord! With what a touch of nature He enters into the daily complexities of men's experience. And yet He is standing in the stress of that critical hour when every spiritual nerve was

strained. For just at that moment He is taking the first step to make it clear that in spite of all His passionate patriotism He must split with Judaism. He has given His judgment. Judaism cannot bear reform, and He cannot be content to serve merely as a reformer. His mission is too original, too strong, to work within the older limitations. If He were to attempt, He tells them, to infuse His Spirit into the traditional forms and habits of old Israelitish piety, they would simply break under the tension. The pressure, the impulse of the incoming arrival, would be revolutionary and destructive. The old wine skins would crack, the new patch of reform would tear away at the weakness of the old garment; it would simply make it even more evident than before that the material was worn out. No, He cannot afford merely to reform, He must create, and His new Spirit must build its own house where it may lodge. That is His position.

2. 'No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new.' Let us think for ourselves how pathetic is the complaint, as it falls from the lips of Him who comes bringing with Him the new wine that He, with strong desire, desires to drink with His friends. It is to Himself He says it. He stands there, in His hand the chalice full to the very brim of the love that He bears them. He knows, as none else knows, all that it is worth. He knows—who better than He?—what it costs to bring. He will lay down His life, He will shed His blood that they may drink of the blood; and yet, even as He holds out the cup, He recognizes that it will repel. Though it be His life-blood they will not be able to desire it; they will look at it; they will consider it; and they will refuse it. 'While the old is so good, so pleasant, so friendly, we want nothing better than what we have already'—so they will say, and it is quite natural, He says, that they should say it. Why should they like it? It is not to their taste; it is sure to offend; it must, for it is new, and they like it mellow. And often it will be the most devout and the most excellent who will have acquired the most rooted habits of association. They have long been content with what has been given them; they have taken a delight in the fine and chastened flavour, and this very excellence will stand in the way and bar them from accepting the cup that their Lord brings.

And all down the ages He will be subject to the same bitter refusal. The men whom He most wants will decline to go further. They will stand on the old lines given by God Himself. 'That is enough for us,' so they will say; and yet Jesus calls us always to new things, to advance in the spiritual life. We are bound to be moving onward and upward. Our very life is movement, and as soon as we have got hold of one grace from God there is another and a new one waiting to carry us further. How woeful if the very goodness of the grace already given induces us to reject the fresh offer—if we use Christ against Himself. So excellent is His goodness to us, we ask for no more; so pleasant is it to be faithful in a little, to serve God as we are, we can go on happily doing the same, rejoicing over it. We like it; our whole life is smooth and kindly and excellent, let it go on in its old way, we want nothing better! Is not that the constant refusal which Christ has to encounter from His own? His gifts to us defeat their own object. They were meant to spur us on to hunger and thirst, and they only serve to keep us contented with them and with ourselves.

Let us see what it is that Christ is proposing for us. The one thing quite certain is that He is proposing something, some definite move onward, some rise in the moral standard, some growth in spiritual capacity. He is never content. If we have brought forth some fruit He will prune us till we bring forth more—something new, and therefore something unpleasant, repellent, requiring effort to trust, something of which to conquer dislike. So far less troublesome, so far more natural, to go on as we were. Spare Him that disappointment! He has foreseen it. He recognizes how instinctive is the recoil; and yet, instinctive and natural as it is, remember how serious is the issue! Those recoils of old contributed to His killing; they joined the shout, they set up the cross. We, by declining to go forward and learn the new lesson, add to the dead weight of the world; we pass over to death, for to stop is to die.

O Lord, my soul is a forgotten well
Clad round with its own rank luxuriance;

A fountain a kind sunbeam searches for,
Sinking the lustre of its arrowy finger
Through the long grass its own strange virtue
Hath blinded up its crystal eye withal:
Make me a broad strong river coming down
With shouts from its high hills, whose rocky hearts
Throb forth the joy of their stability
In watery pulses from their inmost deeps;
And I shall be a vein upon thy world,
Circling perpetual from the parent deep.[1]

Fact and Form.

Luke vi. 3, 4.—'And Jesus answering them said, Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was an hungred, and they which were with him: how he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shewbread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone?'

It was when the tabernacle was pitched at Nob that the incident occurred to which our Lord made reference, and on which, doubtless to the amazement of the Pharisees, He put the seal of His approval. He reminded His antagonists that David and his men, when they were being ruthlessly hunted down by Saul, made their way to the tabernacle, hungry, tired, and desperate, and demanded the sacred shewbread for their needs. Whether moved by fear or pity, the priest transgressed the rubric, and on that Sabbath day the bread which was intended for ordained priests to eat in the Holy place was used to satisfy the hunger of a starving band of outlaws. And in effect the great Teacher who came from God said that this was right, not wrong.

Now few things would appear to a Jew more sacred than the shewbread. It was one of the three symbols to be found in the sanctuary. The golden candlestick represented the light Jehovah shed on the men who drew near to Him; the altar of incense symbolized the prayers by which His servants consecrated themselves to His service; and the shewbread, on its table of gold-covered acacia wood, was a sign of fellowship between God and man, a foreshadowing of the bread which, in the Christian Church, is still an emblem of spiritual communion. Twelve loaves were made by priestly hands each Sabbath, and placed on the table in order to represent the twelve tribes, no one of which was excluded from fellowship with God; and the stale bread thus displaced was reverently eaten by the priests, in solemn silence, within the Holy place.

Christ's use of the incident was to justify His own disciples, who were being blamed for plucking and eating corn on the Sabbath day. Mosaic law allowed corn to be gathered by hungry passers-by, but the Talmud expressly forbade doing this on a Sabbath day, because it was a form of labour. But Jesus referred the fault-finders to what they would recognize as good authority. He reminded them that even the necessary duties of the sanctuary compelled the priests themselves to do certain work, some of it menial as that of ordinary bakers. He also showed how David, their national hero, under the pressure of want, violated one of the laws of Jewish ritual. And then, with what must have seemed to His disciples sublime daring, He declared that He Himself was greater than the Temple, and therefore in His service all things became sacred, and disciples who were loyal to Him might disregard what was conventional, though in its proper place it might be useful. His disciples had grown hungry through following Him and were right in disregarding a rule which forbade them to pluck corn and eat it on the Sabbath day, for He, the Son of Man, was Lord even of the Sabbath, indeed the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.

Two principles of conduct are suggested.

1. The eating of the sacred bread by hungry men throws some light, first, on the *relation of ceremonial to reality*. When our Lord declared that David was right, and that His disciples were right, though they disobeyed certain rules which were desirable in themselves, He repudiated conventional sanctity wherever it would hinder real helpfulness. In His view nothing was too sacred for use if it conduced to man's true welfare. His boldness and freedom in this teaching must have been startling and even shocking to the scribes and Pharisees, for their religion consisted largely in the careful observance of form and ritual.

This is evidently a far-reaching principle. It goes further than many care to follow its lead,

[1] George Macdonald.

and the right and safe use of it demands the continual control of the Holy Spirit, lest what we call 'freedom' should become carelessness, or self-assertion, or irreverence.

It is by no means easy to cherish proper respect for what is sacred and yet to claim and exercise the right to use it with perfect freedom. This, it appears, was what David did. He was essentially a reverent man, and all his upbringing and habits would make him regard the shewbread with awe; yet when his men were starving for bread, he would not let it lie useless on the golden table of the sanctuary. Like him we are to claim everything for its best and completest use, and we may rightly break with tradition and precedent, if only thus we can meet greater necessity.

¶ I remember when visiting some of the magnificent and gorgeous churches at Troitza, near Moscow, I was fairly amazed at the contrast between the dirty, ragged, miserable pilgrims and the priceless jewels flashing on every side from the walls and from the sacred pictures. If all these had been sold and used for the education of the ignorant, the ennoblement of the degraded, and the housing of the outcasts, ecclesiasticism would be doing in our day what David did when he used the sacred shewbread to satisfy the hunger of his starving men. Men are more than things, the realities of life are more than its ceremonies—'things seen are temporal, things unseen are eternal.'[1]

2. Once more, let this Christ-chosen incident throw light on the *relation of the sacred to the secular*. Do not imagine that what you hear about in the service of the sanctuary is meant only for sacred places, or is appropriate only to Sabbath days, that it is lawful for the priests only. You who are most conscious of spiritual poverty and unworthiness have a right to the highest truths and the loftiest fellowship, and if you claim it in faith and penitence the great High Priest Himself will press the shewbread into your hands. Thus strengthened, you may go back to what you call secular to make it sacred, writing 'Holiness unto the Lord' on the bells of the horses, and the pots and pans of the household, as the prophet Zechariah foretold. Just as David's soldiers after eating the sacred shewbread went back to their hiding-places, or marched forward to the fight in the strength of it, so you may go to your duties as a citizen, as a tradesman, as a clerk, as a housekeeper, as a lawyer, a doctor, as husband or wife, daughter or son, stronger, braver, purer from communion with God. Inspiration is needed as much for daily duty as for preaching the gospel. The highest worship is to make you ready for the lowliest occupation. The divinest strength may be employed in the commonest tasks. Carry the sacred shewbread into all your wanderings. Take with you the Lord Jesus Christ as you walk through the cornfield. Then all duty shall be sacred, all pleasure wholesome, and every rough wind shall become a song.

See, I am cumbered, Lord,
With serving, and with small vexatious things.
Upstairs, and down, my feet
Must hasten, sure and fleet.
So weary that I cannot heed Thy word;
So tired, I cannot now mount up with wings.
I wrestle—how I wrestle!—through the hours.
Nay, not with principalities, nor powers—
Dark spiritual foes of God's and man's—
But with antagonistic pots and pans:
With footmarks in the hall,
With smears upon the wall,
With doubtful ears, and small unwashen hands,
And with a babe's innumerable demands.
I toil with feverish haste, while tear-drops glisten.

(O, child of mine, be still. And listen—listen!)

At last, I laid aside
Important work, no other hands could do
So well (I thought), no skill contrive so true.
And with my heart's door open—open wide—
With leisured feet, and idle hands, I sat.
I, foolish, fussy, blind as any bat,
Sat down to listen, and to learn. And lo,
My thousand tasks were done the better so.[1]

The Pharisees and the Sabbath.

Luke vi. 5.—'The son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.'

THERE is one topic upon which each of the four Evangelists dwells; it would not be easy to say which dwells upon it most emphatically. That

[1] A. Rowland, *The Exchanged Crowns*, 89.

[1] Fay Inchfawn, *The Verse-Book of a Homely Woman*, 16.

topic is the Sabbath Day. Evidently they regard our Lord's words respecting it as illustrating the whole course of His teaching and of His life. His difference with the Pharisees respecting it was not an external superficial difference. It did not concern certain cases which might be taken out of a general rule. It was radical and essential. If they were right in their maxims respecting the Sabbath, He was utterly wrong; He was a subverter of God's law, a blasphemer of His Name. If He was right, they were not carrying a true principle to excess. Their principle was false. And it affected their whole conduct; it compelled them to reject the Son of Man, to deny that a Son of Man could be the Son of God.

There can be no doubt that this issue was involved in these controversies. All the Evangelists force it upon us. Read the report of the transactions which are recorded in this chapter as it is given in the twelfth chapter of Matthew, in the second and third chapters of Mark; read above all the fifth chapter and the ninth chapter of John; and you will feel that the battle was, in the judgment of the narrators, one of life and death. So Luke tells us in the eleventh verse of this chapter, 'And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.' On the other hand, Mark records that when Jesus healed the man with the withered hand, 'he looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.' There is no sentence exactly like that in all the Gospels. Remember that Christ's anger was caused by the objections which were raised against Him for breaking the Sabbath, and then consider whether the whole subject does not demand the most serious attention that we can give to it. The particular errors of the Pharisees may not be ours. The particular acts which Christ justified may not be acts with which we should find fault. But if it is a question of eternal truth, and of rebellion against that truth, we may be sure that the circumstances of our time will illustrate both the one and the other as well as the circumstances of that time.

1. The words of our text are the words upon which the whole controversy turns. The Pharisees stood upon what seemed to them impregnable ground. 'God has given us a law. By that law He has established an institution. He has allowed us six days in which we may do our own works. He has claimed one day for Himself. On that day He has commanded us to abstain from our works. On that day our services are due expressly and exclusively to Him.' It was thus that they translated the words, 'Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates.' Was it not a most plausible interpretation? Will it not occur to some of us that there could not be any other? We might say so if another had not been given; if that other did not form a substantive part of the law itself; if that other was not the Divine interpretation; if that other did not, in letter and in spirit, contradict the interpretation of the scribes. 'For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.' What difference did these words make? They declared that work was Divine as well as rest. They declared that work was appointed for man by God just as rest was appointed for man by God. They declared that human work was the image of God's work, as human rest was the image of God's rest. They said to the Israelites, the Sabbath day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God, because He desires the manservant and the maidservant and the stranger in the gates to rest as well as to work—in other words, not to be excluded from any part of His blessedness.

The Pharisee simply reversed the maxim of his sacred books. He converted the Sabbath into a sign of bondage. A Taskmaster more cruel and powerful than Pharaoh had imposed it under tremendous penalties upon His subjects. And it was therefore esteemed a great gift and mercy that for six days they might be exempt from the service of such a Taskmaster. On those they might be their own masters or have the comfort of being only under the dominion of earthly masters. This had become—there can be no doubt of it—the Pharisaic habit of mind. The Lord God, said that school, has enjoined upon

us certain services, which must be punctually rendered. It is at our peril that we neglect them. The Sabbath day stands foremost in the list of obligations. It enters into the commandments themselves. Other duties may be desirable. We may gain many rewards by performing them. But this belongs to the whole land. This must be enforced upon every Israelite.

2. The question how it should be enforced introduced of course a multitude of regulations, refinements, inevitable yet dishonest indulgences. There were debates without end about what was to be tolerated and what was to be prohibited; debates most tormenting and at the same time most enervating to the conscience, drawing the man at every step farther from the service of the Lord God. Who could break this yoke? It was far more galling, far more destructive of the true Jewish life, far more fatal to the true Jewish worship, than the government of the Romans. Can we wonder that the Christ, who came to set at liberty them that are bound, should at the very commencement of His ministry and throughout it wage war with this form of oppression?

(1) The first case recorded in this chapter brings out one of the Pharisaical rules for keeping the Sabbath day. The disciples are walking through the cornfields. As they walk they pluck the ears of corn and rub them in their hands. They are asked how they can do that which is unlawful on the Sabbath day. The answer comes in the form of an example from their own history. 'Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was an hungred, and they which were with him; how he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shewbread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone?' To be confronted by an act of David was startling to the worshippers of precedent. The precedent, too, had a wide application. The institution of the shewbread had a purpose. One who knew its purpose could dare to break through any mere formalities relating to the observance of it. The hunger of David's soldiers was a more sacred thing, in David's judgment, than a rule about the priests. Did he not show that he was a man after God's own heart by acting as if it were? Did not the Pharisees show that they were not men after God's own heart by putting the institution of the Sabbath between man and God, when it was intended by God for man? The Sabbath, Jesus says in another Gospel, was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. Here He affirms the same doctrine as broadly in the words, 'The son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.' We must not alter this expression, or substitute for it any seeming equivalent of our own. He does not say, 'I, being the Lord of all, the Son of God, can do what I like; I can make laws bend to my pleasure.' He says the very contrary of this. He says, 'I am the Son of Man, and as such—in that character—I claim the Sabbath as mine. I claim it for man. So doing, I am not destroying the fourth commandment, but fulfilling it. I am asserting in act that relation between God and man which it asserts in letter. I, the Son of Man, am claiming the Sabbath day as a Divine ordinance for the deliverance of men, for the protection of men. I say that if it is used *against* men, as a mere arbitrary rule which they are to observe, its purpose is frustrated; it is turned from a blessing into a curse.'

¶ The whole thing is a warning to those who, holding strict Sabbatarian views, are not content to hold them for themselves, but attempt to impose them upon others, un-Christianizing the working man or the shop boy who goes to the country on a Sunday. Fitting on him the name of Sabbath-breaker, they shut him out as far as they can from Christ's Communion, and often when the man is weak drive him into evil by giving him a bad name.

The man is not breaking the Sabbath; he is keeping it by taking refreshment. Do not bind a sin upon a man's conscience by a half view of the Sabbath. Do not follow him into the country as the Pharisees followed Christ and the disciples into the corn-fields, and denounce him as a Sabbath-breaker. Take the larger, more human view of Jesus. Say to him, 'The Sabbath was made for you; for your body's rest, for that also of your mind and spirit. Give, then, due response to all. You do not sin by going into the country, or by any honest and natural recreation, but you do not fulfil the whole of the command or your own want, and you wrong

yourself, unless you also make the day one of spiritual blessing.'[1]

(2) The next case, that of the withered hand, may show us why Christ dealt so severely with the other objection. 'It came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught; and there was a man whose right hand was withered. And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him. But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it? And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so; and his hand was restored whole as the other.'

The Pharisees are looking with keen hungry eyes upon one whom they have marked as their victim. To cherish these feelings, to be plotting murder, was not, in their judgment, at all unsabbatical. Their reverence for the law of God led them, so they believed, into this state of mind. Then comes forth the command to the sick man to arise, the life-giving power which restores his body to its proper orderly state. Here is surely a sign of the Kingdom of Heaven; a sign of its nature; a sign that it was the fulfilment of the Law. And then the searching question follows, 'Which is lawful—which is in conformity with the law of God, with the law of the day of rest—the exercise of the killing power, or of the renovating power? Am I keeping the Sabbath, or are you?' No inquiry could be more exasperating. It must either have brought them to the feet of the Son of Man, or have led them to commune among themselves how best they could accomplish their design of putting Him to death.

The Sabbath a Delight.

Luke vi. 9.—'Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil?'

THE Sabbath was for the Jews a Divine institution; its strict observance was a Divine command; its aim was one of deepest importance—that an absolute suspense of the law of labour should forcibly recall men's minds to the supremacy of God. The Pharisees were therefore right to observe it, and to observe it strictly. It was not in this that they went wrong, but in making the right observance a matter of spiritual pride. Righteousness became self-righteousness, and thus contradicted itself. When self is admitted into the spirit, he plays the traitor and hands it over to his ally, the devil. Thus, to enhance the satisfaction of self-righteousness, the strictness of Sabbath-keeping was increased by a mass of pedantic and scrupulous rules, until the commandment of God was overladen with the traditions of men. Each new rule made and kept was a new feather in the plume of spiritual pride.

1. But there is a way surely of keeping the Sabbath without making it minister to spiritual pride.

Boswell tells us that Dr. Johnson, in his forty-sixth year, wrote in his Journal this scheme of life for the Lord's day:—

'Having lived not without an habitual reverence for the Sabbath, yet without that attention to its religious duties which Christianity requires; I resolve henceforth—(1) To rise early, and in order to that, to go to sleep early on Saturday. (2) To use some extraordinary devotion in the morning. (3) To examine the tenor of my life, and particularly the last week; and to mark my advances in religion, or recessions from it. (4) To read the Scriptures methodically with such helps as are at hand. (5) To go to Church twice. (6) To read books of divinity, either speculative or practical. (7) To instruct my family. (8) To wear off by meditation any worldly soil contracted in the week.'

(1) First: 'To rise early, and in order to that, to go to sleep early on Saturday.' The Psalms of David are full of early rising on the Sabbath morning. And all up and down the Bible; and all up and down those books of biography and autobiography that come next to the Bible, the same practice is everywhere exhibited and enjoined. And an English writer who was well known to Dr. Johnson must have both rebuked and directed him in this very matter. 'I will begin with the last day of the week, and with the latter end of that day, I mean Saturday

[1] S. A. Brooke, *Sunshine and Shadow*, 134.

evening, on which I have fasted ever since I was a youth in Venice, for being delivered from a very great danger. And on Sunday morning I rise earlier than upon other days, to prepare myself for the sanctifying of it.'

(2) Second: 'To use some extraordinary devotion in the morning.' Dr. Johnson's Sabbath-day instructor just mentioned says this also on this subject: 'This year I use some extraordinary acts of devotion to usher in the Sunday in hymns and various prayers of my own devising on Saturday night before I go to bed.' If anyone is at a loss and wishes to be shown an example of an extraordinary act of devotion for a Sabbath morning, there is nothing better than Bishop Andrewes' First Day of the Week. In his magnificent devotion for the First Day of the Week the devout Bishop is carried above himself. Here Andrewes is as good as Hooker is at his seraphic best; this, indeed, is simply Hooker's immortal First Book set to temple music. It is such devotional work as this that justifies the saying that if once you begin to pray with Bishop Andrewes you will continue to pray with him all your days. If you would learn by heart an extraordinary devotion for a Sabbath morning, consult the devotional Bishop.

(3) Third: 'To examine my advances in religion, or my recessions from it, particularly the last week.' To examine in what I have made some real progress last week. In what I have kept a command over myself. When and where I have spoken advisedly with my lips. When and where I held my peace under sore provocation to speak. And when and where I subdued and kept under any other of my besetting sins. As also, when and where I receded, and went back. Against what persons I sinned last week in my anger, in my moroseness, in my envy, in the malice of my heart, and in my evil speaking.

(4) Fourth: 'To read the Scriptures methodically with such helps as are at hand.' Who nowadays reads the Scriptures methodically on the Lord's day, or on any other day? Is there any other book in the whole world that is read so unmethodically as the Scriptures? Any history, any biography, any philosophy, any poem, any novel? No, not one. Most men read the Bible just where it chances to open, and it is a bare chance if it opens some days at all. And yet what a Divine opportunity it is to read the Book of all books methodically, if we only had Dr. Johnson's noble mind about method in the Bible and on the Sabbath day. 'And with such helps as are at hand.' Only, we must ourselves secure that the right helps in this matter are indeed at hand. The right helps will not come to our hand of their own accord. When you want to have any real help of any kind at hand for any purpose, if you do not already possess it, you go to where it is sold and buy it, and you bring it home and put it in a place set apart for it, so that you may be able to lay your hand on it the moment you need it. And if you are not able to buy it, you borrow it, or you beg it, as Dr. Johnson first borrowed and then begged *The Appeal to All Who Doubt* from Miss Boothby. 'I return you Law's *Appeal,* which, however, I entreat you to give me. Samuel Johnson, *impransus.*'

(5) Fifth: 'To instruct my family.' We wish he had taken time to tell us how he did it, and how he succeeded in it. For many of us who are quite good hands at instructing other men's families are but poor hands at instructing our own. But just to make Dr. Johnson's Sabbath-day resolutions, and not to recede from them, is the very best way of instructing both ourselves and our families. For it is a true proverb that example is much better than precept. To rise early on Sabbath morning, as Dr. Johnson did, and then to fill up the whole day as he did—that will impress and instruct your family as nothing else will.

(6) And lastly: 'To wear off by meditation any worldly soil contracted in the week.' You will need something much more pungent than mere meditation to do that. At the same time, much concentrated and uninterrupted meditation is absolutely necessary to begin with. And, among its many other priceless blessings, the Sabbath has always been cherished and loved for the opportunity and for the assistance it gives to true meditation, and to the washing away of worldly soil, and all other kinds of soil. And a favourite Scottish Psalm expresses that purifying operation to perfection:—

Do thou with hyssop sprinkle me,
I shall be cleansed so;

Yea, wash thou me, and then I shall
Be whiter than the snow.

2. Is there not also a way of keeping the Sabbath and making it a delight? This is what Dr. Alexander Whyte says: Never and nowhere since the best days of ancient Israel has the Sabbath day been so sanctified and so enjoyed as in our own Church and country of Scotland. The Scottish Sabbath is a proverb from very opposite poles. It is a proverb of the peace and the sweetness and the sanctity and the spiritual fruitfulness of the Christian Sabbath. And on the other hand, it is to other people a very proverb of gloom and weariness and burdensomeness, and what not. Which of these two poles best speaks the truth is best decided by every man's own experience. If my experience is of any interest to any one, here it is. I have had more than sixty years' experience of a scrupulously kept Sabbath day, and it has all along been to me one of my chief blessings in a life full of blessings. I can testify with full honesty and entire integrity that from my childhood I loved the rest and the retirement and the reading and the church and the classes of the Sabbath day with all my heart.

I did not know Wordsworth in those early days, but I can truthfully say that he has drawn my exact portrait in his two brothers, Leonard and James. The Sabbath books, few but the best, of those boyhood days of mine abide with me to this day. And I wish your children and my children no better memories of your home and mine than I have of a good book at my mother's fireside on a Saturday night and a whole Sabbath day. For with us the Sabbath day tidiness and the Sabbath day quiet always began early on the Saturday night.

Nor did I make Jeremy Taylor's notable acquaintance till long after those early days. But I subscribed to his testimony as soon as I read it. 'He who keeps the day most strictly, and most religiously, he keeps it best, and most consonant to the designs of the Church, and the ends of religion, and the opportunity of the present leisure, and the interests of his own soul.'

Nor did I know William Law till far too long after, but I have never forgotten these weighty words of his on this same subject: 'If a man should oblige himself to abstain on the Lord's day from any innocent and lawful things, as travelling, visiting, common conversation, and discoursing upon worldly matters, as trade, news, and the like; if he should devote the day, besides the public worship, to greater retirement, reading, devotion, instruction, and works of charity; it may seem but a small thing or a needless nicety, to require a man to abstain from such things as may be done without sin, yet whoever would try the benefit of such a rule, would perhaps thereby find such a change made in his spirit, and such a taste of piety raised in his mind, as he was an entire stranger to before.'

And your own forefathers were wont to rise at six o'clock on the Sabbath morning to hear Edward Irving, our Scottish Hooker, discoursing on this subject in this way: 'All letters of business, all messages of business, and all conversation of business, and all books which treat of business, we should exclude. We should not encourage any traffic, nor employ any Sabbath vehicles. I have no ascetic views of the Sabbath, and grudge not to the people or to myself whatever may refresh and comfort the body or the mind. And if they find that end to be served by walking abroad to meditate and muse upon the works of God, I commend them to that or any other method which they find best for fulfilling the purposes of God. But sure I am, a crowded vehicle, a public inn, a crowded garden, a bustling highway, a park parade, are not the places most fitting for repose and refreshment; and they who so spend the Sabbath, and call it keeping the commandment, do but lie unto the Lord, and to their own soul.'[1]

¶ We think of time often as a kind of place. It is at least a journey, along which we move. And it was a wonderful achievement of humanity, at so early a period of its evolution, to secure in its daily progress a plot of ground for each week and make it Sabbatical. Sunday is changing its aspect; it has changed it enormously within the lifetime of some of us. With most of the new feeling we can sympathize. Many of the old restrictions were irksome, having their origin in hard legalism and unworthy fear. But it will be an immeasurable loss to humanity if Sunday ceases to be holy. We need to keep this plot hedged round. Its flowers are the loveliest of

[1] A. Whyte, *The Walk, Conversation and Character of Jesus Christ our Lord*, 271ff.

human culture, and we cannot bear to see them trodden under foot. Shall we disfranchise our week of this one precious, unique element in it? Can we afford to lose that ineffable aroma of peace and love and sacred thought that to Christian souls has, week by week, for ages stolen in on our sordid atmosphere as a breath from another world? In our crowded towns the authorities are everywhere seeking to secure for the people parks and open spaces where grass and flowers may grow, and where the clogged lungs may inhale a breath of the country. And Sunday has been in the week our open space, where our wearied populations may find their souls—may lift their eyes towards life's nobler ideals, and breathe, for a little space, a serener and a diviner air. Shall we cease to feel the thrill of holy George Herbert when in his quaint, exquisite words he sings:

> The Sundays of man's life,
> Threaded together on Time's string,
> Make bracelets to adorn the wife
> Of the eternal, glorious King.
> On Sunday, Heaven's gate stands ope,
> Blessings are plentiful and rife,
> More plentiful than hope!

Let joy of all sorts abound on Sunday; let there be mirth and laughter in it. But for heaven's sake let us not shut off its loftier significance; let us not allow a drab materialism to roof us in, shutting us off from sight of the stars.[1]

¶ Nightfall came upon the sweetest Sabbaths of my youth, when I had not only held my father's hand on the way to church, but at some other hour, held the same strong hand, strolling in the sunshine through unaccustomed places. These experiences rescued the day from the tedium of overwrought and morbid piety, and not only prevented a wish to strike Sunday from the calendar but gave the 'Good-night' prayer an added fervour because it had been a sunny day.[2]

¶ One thing we can all do: we can make Sunday sunnier for someone else. So much wrong might be stayed if sin-germs were slain by a ray of sunshine; so many dry lives refreshed if rained on by a sun-shower of kindness.

[1] J. Brierley, *Religion and To-Day*, 195.
[2] C. C. Pierce, *The Hunger of the Heart for Faith*, 51.

And if some bright bit of sunshine has gone out of our own lives, we shall find a new joy in helping to keep it in the lives of others. It was a fine thought, and great in its simplicity, that Ian Maclaren put into the mouth of old Drumsheugh in *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* in one of those rare moments when men unbend to each other:

'Some day a'll tell ye ma story, Weelum, for you and me are auld freends, and will be till we dee.'

'MacLure felt beneath the table for Drumsheugh's hand, but neither man looked at the other. "Weel, a' we can dae noo, Weelum, gin we haena mickle brichtness in oor ain hames, is tae keep the licht frae gaein' oot in anither hoose."'

That's it! It will require an effort. And it is in the effort that we shall find our Sunday sunshine—a sunshine thrown by the light of the Sunday Sacrifice.

So shall Sunday be to us that which it was ordained to be—the sunshine of the week; so shall we carry over our Sunday worship into our weekday work, and make our weekday work the reflex of our Sunday worship.[1]

The Mountain and the Plain.

Luke vi. 12.—'He went out into a mountain to pray.'
Luke vi. 17.—'And he came down, . . . and stood in the plain.'

THERE can be no mountain without a plain, and no plain without a mountain somewhere. We cannot think of the two apart, and we must not live as if the two could be dissevered in our lives. They are one and inseparable for ever, as are the spring and the river. Life must have its mountain as well as its plain.

1. The Gospels illustrate very clearly the relation of the mountain to the plain and the plain to the mountain. They show the continuous oscillation of life from the one to the other in the spiritual history and humane activity of Jesus.

(1) Take, for example, Luke vi. 12: 'He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.' There we have a geographical description of a mystical experience, of what the mystics call 'the dark night of the

[1] E. E. Holmes, *The Days of the Week*, 15.

soul,' 'the Divine Dark,' they call it (those beautiful mystics), the Divine Dark of the presence of God, 'dark from excessive light,' they say. In our humbler terms there is the mountain, the mountain of communion and inspiration, solemn, lonely, still, shadowed, the heart of Christ in the secret dark with God.

Read on to the seventeenth and nineteenth verses. 'And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, . . . and a great multitude . . . came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases; . . . there went virtue out of him, and healed them all.' Now here is the plain, the crowded plain of human ills and sorrows and want. And here is the return from the mountain to the plain, from the cloister to the crowd, from communion with God to commerce with man. And we see also the effect of the mountain upon the plain, the effect of solitude upon society, of a refreshed soul upon the famished crowd, of communion with God upon the need of man—'virtue went out of him, and healed them all.' The power of the mountain healed the hurt of the plain.

The mountain is for the sake of the plain. Of course, worship is for the sake of work; the Church is for the sake of the world; Sunday is for the sake of Monday; the soul's solitary communion is for the sake of the crowd; the knowledge of Christ is for the uses of daily life; the vision of heaven is for the healing of earth. But here is the point, and one that must not be overlooked, though it is likely to be forgotten in this self-sufficient and practical age—the mountain is necessary to the plain. On its snowy heights, in its solitary fastnesses, its far and dark recesses, the springs break forth and the rivers rise to flow downward to refresh and gladden the plain. All streams flow from above! Where there is no mountain the plain is a desert. Where there are no upland gathering grounds of fructifying waters the lowlands are waste and barren. Without the mountain of the Lord, without mysticism, humanitarianism had had a hard time in this world. It were likely to dribble away and die out at last without the inspiration and pressure from on high.

(2) Again, take a look at Matthew xiv. 13-23. John has been murdered by Herod. 'When Jesus heard of it, he departed . . . into a desert place apart; and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities. And Jesus . . . was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick. . . . And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.' Here we have the mountain and the plain in close conjunction, as they ought to be. We have this also—the retreat from the plain to the mountain. He was gone into the 'Divine Dark' again, this social worker and healer of human ills. We see this most necessary thing, the forsaking of the crowded ways of life and the appealing and appalling needs of the world, the withdrawal from all commerce with man on the plain to communion with God on the mountain.

Jesus was not always going about doing good. He could not; no man can. There comes a time when the doing is worthless and fruitless. No, Jesus was often away getting power, getting the virtue and the valour which enabled Him and inspired Him to do good. Sometimes He sent the multitudes away, sometimes He went away from the multitudes. He went, of course, in order to return. But He went; that is the point. He left the plain that in the mountain the drained powers might be renewed and recharged for use in refreshing the plain again.

(3) Consider, further, the beautiful narrative in the first chapter of Mark. Note the interchange of life upon one level with that upon the other. 'At even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, . . . and all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils.' There, once more, is the fearful plain of the world's sad woes and clamant ills. And there again is the Divine Servant of man immersed in the Divine task of lifting heavy loads from bending backs and leaden griefs out of breaking hearts. But in the very next verse the mountain looms again and Jesus is in retreat thither. 'And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.' But in the next verse or two we find Him returning to the plain and the crowd. 'And Simon and they that were with him followed after him. And when they had found him, they said unto

him, All men seek for thee. . . . And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns that I may preach there also. . . . And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.'

The doctors and physiologists speak of the systole and diastole motions of the heart, the dilatation to receive and the contraction that expels the blood. This motion in the life of Jesus, now retreating to the solitary sources of inspiration, again returning to the crowded and clamorous ways of service, is one of the secrets of Jesus. It must be the practice of humanity's friends if they would not get depleted and tired and discouraged. They must go away to get in order to return and give. They must haunt the mountain that they may live and work and not grow weary upon the plain.

(4) Look once again at this secret of Christ. Consider the incident that is called the Transfiguration. Here also in the narrative the mountain and the plain are conjoined in an inseparable unity. 'And it came to pass . . . he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: who . . . spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.' There is the mountain with its solemn mystic communion, its dazzling effects and alterations in the man from the plain. Read on—'And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him.' With them was a sorely distressed father with a sick son, whom Jesus healed. There once more is the plain, the plain of human need served by the man from the mountain. The Transfiguration, what was it? Trance, ecstasy, vision, history? What need one care? It was this anyway. It stands to what follows as the mountain to the plain. There followed the fitful, fevered crowd in Jerusalem, an arduous, disputatious week, Pilate's judgment-hall, the soldiers' guardroom, Calvary, and the grave. That was the plain, and all so calmly faced and endured. The mountain was the preparation for all that. In the mountain the solitary soul got strong for all that; got prevenient victory over all that. Death lurked in the plain; deathlessness was the subject of meditation on the mountain. The meditation on deathlessness was the preparation for death. He communed with Moses and Elijah. He thought of these two great souls. No man ever looked into the sepulchre of the one. The other was swept over death and the grave in the chariot of the Lord. The Cross, and death, and the grave awaited Christ on the plain. But from the mountain He looked over them; He saw beyond them. The high communion there robbed death of its sting and the grave of its terrors. That is what the mountain is for—not to keep us out of the plain but to fit us for the plain. Its office is to make the soul equal to all the issues and exigencies of the plain. 'His face is set toward Jerusalem.' His feet are toward the plain. But He goes there from the mountain—to strife from peace, to the crowd from solitude, to the Cross from communion with God, to death from the vision of life. And this is the story of the mountain and the plain as we read it in the life of Jesus.

2. Now the meaning for us is clear. Religion must operate upon the plain. That is what religion is for. It is to be used in daily life. It is to be practised on the common levels of existence, in the home and on the street, in office and workshop, in market and factory. We have it that we may use it upon the crowd, upon the lame and the blind, the sick and the poor, and round the whole circle of human needs. Religion, in a word, is conduct; it is all that we call morality; it is social service; it is humanitarianism. Its mission is to the multitude. It is intended for the healing of the people. If we follow Christ we shall find ourselves where there are many sorrows; we shall be stilling many a storm of grief and wiping away many a tear. We shall be visiting the sick; we shall be feeding the hungry; we shall be recharging the lives of hurt and defeated men and women with our own virtue and valour. We shall be in the thick of the evils of the world. We shall not be mere spectators of the fight, applauding daintily the thin line of strugglers who are fighting the devil and all his works in this world. We shall be in the thick of it, not by any sort of proxy but in person. We shall vigorously protest against all the ancient wrongs and smite them with the strength of God.

But it is just as true that the mountain is nec-

essary to the plain! The plain is dependent upon the mountain. Thence, from above, from on high, comes the virtue that gives life to the plain. Those who have worked hardest on the plain, who have operated religion most earnestly there, who have got tired with Christ in the service of man, know the office of the mountain. They know that hours in the mountain are necessary if one is to live and work on the plain. Perhaps they are the only ones who do know how necessary the mountain is. There in the lofty solitude, in the 'secret place of the most High,' they renew their strength, that on the plain they may run and not be weary, and walk and not faint.

The emphasis in our day is being placed on practice, not on piety; on work, not on worship; on the plain and its service, not on the mountain and its high communion. No one wishes to weaken that emphasis. But we must beware of a one-sided emphasis. The two levels of life must not be separated. The plain will become a waste if it is not watered from the mountain. Practice will grow weary if it is not supported by piety. The church and the world, solitude and society, the cloister and the crowd, religion and morality, mysticism and humanitarianism—these are the mountain and the plain. And the rounded Christian lesson, taught by Christ and all the best servants of humanity, is this—the two shall be conjoined in every virtuous and valorous life, and made inseparable for ever.

¶ It is a great mistake to suppose that retreats from the noise of the world are no longer necessary, that they are characteristic of a religious experience which the race has left behind in its swift movement forward. The modern world looks back with a kind of self-conscious complacency on the mediæval world, and thanks God in a very audible voice that it is no longer what it was five centuries ago. The progress has been great, and nowhere greater than in the freedom and breadth of the religious life as men now understand it; but there have been losses as well as gains, and one of these losses is the apparent disappearance from the consciousness of a multitude of religious people of the need of silence and solitude in order that the presence of God may be felt. . . . There is sore need for a revival of the mediaeval consciousness not only of dependence upon God, but of dependence on meditation, prayer, and solitude of the spirit. The man who speaks often without constant and arduous preparation runs shallow in thought and becomes commonplace in expression; the man who writes without tireless preparation of mind and spirit through reading, observation, and meditation, loses freshness, originality, and force, and becomes a mere maker of sentences; in like manner the religious man whose whole force goes out in practical work, without constant inward devoutness and seeking of God, becomes a religious mechanician and ceases to be a source of inspiration and power.

Activity is the manifestation of life, but it is not life. Life bears the fruit of service and helpfulness, but it is neither visible nor audible; it is hidden in that mystery which not only veils the throne of God but enfolds everything else that is divine among men. To find that life one must withdraw from the visible into the invisible; one must pass from the presence of man into the presence of God.[1]

Prayer as a Working Force.

Luke vi. 12.—'He went out into a mountain to pray.'

If you are ever troubled about prayer, if the question harasses you—What profit is there in prayer?—go back to the fact that Jesus prayed. Use Him as an example, as an argument, and as an inspiration. Believe in Him anew and thus believe in prayer anew. This is what John Knox did, and you know what a mighty man of prayer he was. Queen Mary used to say that she feared the prayers of John Knox more than she did all the armies of her enemies. By prayer he girded himself to fight the last foe, even death. He girded himself by association with the praying Master. On the day before his death he called to his wife and said, 'Go, read me that Scripture where I first cast my anchor!' And so she read him the seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel—that wonderful prayer of Jesus. As he listened to the calm but fervent pleadings of the Saviour of men a new life and a new spirit came into his soul. He forgot his weakness. He saw with a new vision how he who could no longer preach could nevertheless serve his fellow-men. He could serve them by prayer. He could become

[1] H. W. Mabie, *The Life of the Spirit*, 140ff.

an intercessor. And so he gave his last hours up to prayer for the world lying in sin, for the great Reformation, for the church, and for the future triumph of the gospel. By a new study of Jesus Christ at prayer God gave him a new faith in its power and efficacy, and like his Master he became an intercessor on behalf of his fellow-men. In this exercise he died. He lived preaching, he died praying.

Jesus began His career and closed it praying. We find Him praying all through His public career. Palestine was full of His haunts of prayer. Judas knew where His prayer-haunt near Jerusalem was, hence he knew where and when he could best betray Him into the hands of foes. The Jesus of the Book was a man overwhelmed by labours. Multitudes from all parts of the land crowded around Him to be taught, to be blessed, and to be healed. The Pharisees were with Him and so were the doctors of the law, and they were all taking notes of His miraculous cures. Mothers brought their little children for Him to take them in His arms and pray for them. The scribes and Pharisees pressed Him with their puzzling and entrapping questions. Surely there was no prayer in such a life! Why not? He was too busy to have seasons of prayer. You are mistaken; He was sometimes too busy to eat but never too busy to pray. The busier He was the more He prayed and the longer He made His seasons of prayer. It was when He was busiest that the record reads, 'In the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. And Simon and they that were with him followed after him. And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek thee.'

'Too busy to pray!' You might as well say 'Too busy to live.' Prayer is not lost time. It is living itself. It is that without which no time is saved, but all time lost. It conserves time, making it valuable and effective. Jesus prayed before He worked and so got strength for His work; He prayed after He worked and thus made His labours effective and enduring. Like Him we should pray before we act and so get counsel and strength from God; and we should offer prayer after we act and get the blessing of God upon what we have done. Otherwise we shall labour in vain and shall fail. We should do this no matter how busy we are. We should do it because we are busy. Remember this; to pray is to live; not to pray is not to live, it is simply to exist. Prayer in a man's life means wisdom and power and efficacy and success. It means the life of Jesus Christ over again in character, in purpose, and in results.

¶ The ideal of the Christian life is certainly this—that we should naturally, spontaneously and habitually carry every question we have to decide to God. This is not to abdicate our judgment or to disregard the faculties which God has entrusted to us wherewith to come to decisions on practical questions of life. It is the sanctification of judgment. No one is in favour of a man acting thoughtlessly; why should we ever act prayerlessly? For the Christian deliberation should be synonymous with taking counsel of God. When we say, I will make up my mind, we ought to mean, I will endeavour to find out the mind of Christ and to frame my action by that. We want to get rid of this wretched independence—independence of judgment, thought, action; and to feel that it is our privilege as the children of God to know the Father's will in everything and to embody that in utterance and in life.[1]

Consider three things pertaining to the Master in which prayer played an important part.

1. Jesus *carried Himself through the crises of His personal life* by means of prayer.

(1) It was a crisis in His personal life when He entered upon His great ministry. But He did this with prayer. The ministry began at His baptism, when, as we are told, He prayed; and as He prayed the Holy Ghost descended from Heaven in the form of a dove and rested upon Him. This prayer offered on the threshold of His public ministry brought Him the Holy Spirit with power. Now the Holy Spirit with power was His equipment for life. He entered the Messianic ministry through the gateway of prayer.

(2) It was a crisis in His personal life when He preached the Sermon on the Mount. Consider the part in the world which that sermon was destined to play. To build up that sermon was a mighty work. There is no greater effort in all literature. It is the authority in the realm

[1] Arnold Foster, *Memoir and Writings*, 183.

of truth. To frame it and to deliver it and to start it on its eternal career was a giant task. Jesus felt this and so He prepared Himself for His task. How? By prayer. What work did He ever do apart from prayer? He looked to heaven when He furnished the miraculous meal; He looked up to heaven when He stood beside the grave of Lazarus which He was about to unlock. Both of these events were crises in His life and both were made successful by His prayers.

(3) It was a crisis in His life when He was called to go forth and meet the scenes of Calvary. Yes, it was the crisis of crises. But how did Jesus prepare Himself for Calvary? Gethsemane is your answer. In Gethsemane He prayed Himself into readiness. Gethsemane was Calvary before its time. It was Calvary in forecast. The prayer of Gethsemane was this question asked and answered: Shall there be a Calvary or shall there not be a Calvary? Here He really met Calvary and decreed it into existence with all its glorious results. Here was the real battle fought, and here, too, was the real victory won. Because the real victory was won here, therefore was it that Jesus met Pilate with such heroic calmness and was the least disturbed man in all the multitude that swept out of the gates of Jerusalem to the scenes of Golgotha.

2. Jesus *prepared His disciples for their life* and developed them in discipleship by means of prayer. You remember how Jesus led His disciples on in doctrine. How by degrees He taught them who He was, until He led them to the belief that He was the Son of God. The time came for Him to call out from them this fact, as a confession of their faith. That was a great step for them to take—openly to declare His Divine Sonship. How does He do this? He prays them into it. Having prayed over it and for them He approaches the question. Beginning afar off, He asked them one day, 'Who do men say that I am?' When they had given various answers, He asked, 'But who say ye that I am?' Then it was that Peter, speaking for the rest, said, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Then Jesus told him that this was not a natural conclusion worked out by his own mind, it was a revelation from God. Why did Jesus say this? Because He had been praying for this very thing—that God would reveal His Sonship to His disciples. Scripture tells us that at this point of His life He had been praying, and the results reveal just what He had been praying for. But this is not all. He wanted His chosen witnesses to have some unmistakable demonstration of His Divine Sonship; so He took them with Him up on the slopes of Hermon and prayed. As He prayed He was transfigured before them and they saw the flash of the glory of His Deity and heard the voice of the Father speaking from heaven and saying, 'This is my beloved Son, hear ye him.' His transfiguration was a result of prayer. He prayed it into existence and it bore witness to His Deity. Through prayer He brought His disciples into right views concerning Himself.

3. Jesus *established His cause on earth* and provided for its future by means of prayer. The ordination of the Twelve, which founded the school of Apostles, was certainly a part of the establishment of the Lord's cause; but this was done after a whole night spent in the mountain in prayer. That school was the greatest institution ever founded. It meant the establishment of His claims. It meant the future of Christianity. The influence of the Twelve will never cease. They still sit on the thrones of thought, and their words are still the judges of the nations. Even Judas is still a power on the side of Christ. 'I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood.' This is testimony that shall ring for ever for the establishment of Christ's true character.

God is calling us anew to prayer; He is bidding us make prayer the working-power of our life, even as Jesus made it the working-power of His life. More prayer—this is our chief duty. More prayer—this is the crying need. When we get back to prayer as we ought, and when we surround ourselves with it as with a constant atmosphere, we shall be among our fellow-men as those who have been newly born, and newly ordained to service, and newly equipped for the highest and grandest type of the Christ-like life.

Meeting with one whose looks are all imbued
With a still depth, a shining quietude,

Men say (for these none findeth otherwhere)
'Lo, this man cometh from the mount of prayer.'[1]

Disciples and Apostles.

Luke vi. 13.—'And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.'

So there was a time when out of the heart of the discipleship came the apostleship. And what do these words mean? 'Disciple,' of course, means learner. The idea rests entirely between two persons, the teacher and the scholar. It involves nothing but the receiving of knowledge by one of docile mind. But 'apostle' means missionary. Its idea is utterance, or sending forth. It sees and feels the great wide world. It looks out to the very horizon of humanity. It takes truth not as a lesson, but as a message. What the disciple has drunk into his own satisfied soul, the apostle is to carry abroad, wherever there are men to hear it.

1. When Jesus took this great step forward, He did not leave behind His old life with His disciples. He chose out of the number of His disciples twelve, whom also He named apostles. They were to be disciples still. They did not cease to be learners when He made them missionaries. The plant does not cease to feed itself out of the ground when it opens its glorious flowers for the world to see. All the more it needs supply, now that it has fulfilled its life. And so this great epoch in the Christian Church was an addition, not a substitution. John, James, and Peter were all the more devout disciples of the Master, filled themselves all the more eagerly with His truth and spirit, after they had become His apostles and were telling His truth to other men.

2. It is out of the very heart of the discipleship that the apostleship proceeds. It is the very best, the choicest, as we say, of the disciples, that are chosen to be apostles. This is apparent to anyone who reads the story. Jesus calls all His disciples together, and out of them He chooses twelve. It is no inattentive idlers hanging on the outskirts of the group who listen to Him that He thinks good enough to go and carry His message. It is they who have listened to Him longest, and most intelligently, and most lovingly. It is Simon and Andrew, his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas; it is men like these, the very heart and soul of the discipleship, whom He selects and calls apostles.

And so it always is. Always it is the best of the inward life of anything, that which lies the closest to its heart and is the fullest of its spirit, that flowers into the outward impulse which comes to complete its life. It is the most truly thorough learning that by and by begins to be dissatisfied with its own learned luxury, and to desire that all men should have the chance of knowledge. It is the most true refinement that believes in the possible refinement even of the coarsest man. It is the most intelligent appreciation of the blessings of free government that looks beyond the narrow walls of national pride and desires freedom and good government for all the world. It is one of the most beautiful and reassuring facts in all the world that the purer and finer any good attainment grows, the more there comes to it the necessity of expansiveness. It is the crude and half-formed phases of any good growth that are selfish and exclusive. It is the half-cultivated people who guard their feeble culture by arbitrary lines of separation. The heart of any good thing is catholic and expansive. It claims for itself the world. It longs to give itself away, and believes in the capacity of all men to receive it. This noble and true and beautiful truth, whose illustrations are everywhere, was it not declared by Jesus when, out of the choicest heart of the group of His disciples, He selected His apostles?

Most deeply is this truth illustrated in the history of man's idea of God. It is the purest and loftiest and Divinest thought of God that is most generous and world-embracing. Men dream of gods that are scarcely higher or better than themselves; gods stained with passion and with selfishness; and those gods do not care for men. The Lotos-eater pictures his gods like himself. He sees them in their selfish repose.

On the hills like gods together, careless of mankind,
For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are hurl'd
Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly curl'd
Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming world;

[1] F. Langbridge, *Little Tapers*, 13.

Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands.
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps and fiery sands,
Clanging fights and flaming towns, and sinking ships, and praying hands.
But they smile, they find a music centred in a doleful song
Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient tale of wrong,
Like a tale of little meaning though the words are strong.

So sing the Lotos-eaters; then listen to Isaiah's song about his God: 'He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his own arm brought salvation.' By as much more as He is purer and holier, by just so much more is He larger, less able to rest in His own satisfaction, more compelled to go and help the poor sons of men; and so it is out of the heart of the holiest conception of Deity that the Incarnation comes.

3. Shall we not then set down as absolutely fundamental in our study of the Christian Church this relationship between the disciple life and the apostle life, that is, between the inward and the outward impulse? In the life of every parish this relationship ought to be recognized. The failure to recognize it is what makes so many of our churches very far from what they ought to be, keeps them uneasy with a constant doubt of themselves, and a continual sense that they are suspected by the world outside. What is a church for? What is the meaning of a little company gathered out of a great community, which meets in church Sunday after Sunday, year after year? No doubt they are, in the first place, learners, disciples, students together of the truth of God, listeners at the lips of the Master for His revelations. But unless there is continually issuing from the heart of their discipleship a true apostleship, unless the best souls among them keep fresh and live the outward impulse, the consciousness that their church and they exist not for themselves alone but for the world, their church life becomes dead.

There is always an inward, self-enclosing tendency to be resisted by every congregation. Very often the more the congregation wakes up to earnest life, the more this inward tendency asserts its strength. Given its full sweep, it would make the congregation a club, existing for high ends indeed, but existing for its own benefit alone. It would make the pew as exclusive and private a piece of property as the parlour. It would judge the way in which its work was being done by the way in which those few selected people were becoming wiser and better men and women. If it admitted outsiders at all, they would come in simply as spectators of that process of culture which was going on. It would be a church of disciples. It is a constant effort, requiring continual watchfulness in both minister and people, to see that an earnest church does not come to this, to see that it is kept apostolic, with the outward consciousness always alive, knowing that it exists not for its pew-holders, but for the community, for just as many of the human race as it possibly can reach; knowing that its pew-holders will get the best good out of it the more completely they can feel, the more manifestly they can show that they feel, that it is in no real sense their church. It is first God's church, and then the church of all or any of God's children.

¶ There are two uses of a Church—to do good to those within it and, through them, to those without it; the best Church is that which helps most these two ends.[1]

¶ What a satire it is upon our Christianity and our civilization, that the existence of these colonies of heathens and savages in the heart of our capital should attract so little attention! It is no better than a ghastly mockery—theologians might use a stronger word—to call by the name of One who came to seek and to save that which was lost—those Churches which in the midst of lost multitudes either sleep in apathy or display a fitful interest in a chasuble. Why all this apparatus of temples and meeting-houses to save men from perdition in a world which is to come, while never a helping hand is stretched out to save them from the inferno of their present life? Is it not time that, forgetting for a moment their wranglings about the infinitely little or infinitely obscure, they should concentrate all their energies on a united effort to break this terrible perpetuity of whom we cannot describe so clearly, each bring-

[1] J. Ker, *Thoughts for Heart and Life*, 189.

for whom they profess to believe their Founder came to die?[1]

¶ Nothing is more true than that the devotion and loyalty of the Church to her missionary calling is the secret of her success, the divinely appointed method of her advance both at home and abroad. In this she will find her joy, her inspiration, her endowment of power, her meed of honour, her irresistible claim to the world's reverence, and her final, unanswerable apologetic. It is in fact her *raison d'être,* her highest and Divinely emphasized mission in human history. Devotion to this sublime calling will be her password to an unchallenged place among the most influential forces which sway and mould the progress of the race. Nothing would so fully 'vindicate the claim of Christianity to stimulate, to inspire, to lead the world's progress.' The reflex influence of this service would fan the graces of the Christian life and make the Church aflame with thoughts and deeds which were Spirit-born and God-given! If the Church could do its work under the stimulus of a faith-quickened vision of a triumphant Gospel and a redeemed humanity, it would feel the pulses of a new life, and cheerfully give itself to sacrifice and toil, which God would quickly and grandly reward.[2]

The Zealot.

Luke vi. 15.—'Simon which was called the Zealot' (RV).

As we read the names of those twelve disciples whom also Christ named apostles, we have a hint of the varied gifts and qualities bound into one fellowship by the common spirit of discipleship. Here are simple Galilean fishermen for the most part, yet there are one or two, at least, capable of being trained so as to receive the deepest thoughts of Divine revelation and become the teachers of all the ages. Here side by side are Simon the Zealot, the member of a revolutionary party, and Matthew the publican, a man who against all the spirit of Jewish nationalism had set himself to serve the Roman authority. Here are various types of personal character, the many-coloured temperaments of men being prepared for the task of setting forth the many-coloured wisdom of God—Peter the impulsive, John the meditative, Philip the cautious, Thomas the melancholy, and others ing something of his own. But they were all disciples. A disciple is one who learns. He is one who receives. To go on learning and receiving to the end was one-half of the calling of these men, and it is one-half of our calling too. Turn to one of them—Simon the Zealot.

1. St. Luke tells us that Simon was a 'Zealot,' and he repeats the statement in a second list of the Twelve which he gives in the Acts. If you compare these with similar lists in the First and Second Gospels, you find that the latter do not use the word 'Zealot,' but the word 'Cananæan.' This is the word you find in the Revised Version. In the Authorized Version the translation 'Canaanite' is given; but this is due to a misunderstanding. 'Cananæan' does not mean 'Canaanite' or inhabitant of Canaan. The two words are quite different though they sound alike. As the margin of the Revised Version tells us, 'Cananæan' means just what 'Zealot' means. St. Luke preferred the latter word, because he was writing for Gentile readers, to whom 'Cananæan' would have been obscure. We need only to ask, therefore, what is meant by the term 'the Zealot.'

To answer this question, we need to remember that at this time Palestine was more or less under a foreign yoke. Certain parts of the land were ruled by Jewish princes, but these maintained their position at the sufferance of Rome. Judæa itself was a Roman province, administered by a Roman governor who lived at Cæsarea.

Now when a proud, high-spirited people has lost its independence we know what happens. On the one hand, there are those who find it easiest and most profitable to be on good terms with their conquerors. On the other hand, there are those whose soul flames with a passionate love of their native land, who writhe beneath bonds and who are ready to shed their last blood for liberty. Midway between these extremes is the large number of those who in principle agree with the irreconcilables, but who are not ready to risk their all in a rising which seems foredoomed to failure. In the times of which we are speaking, all these parties were represented among the Jews. The 'loyalists' were the rich and courtly Sadducees; the 'moderates' were the Pharisees; the 'revolutionists' were the Zealots.

perdition, and to rescue some at least of those

[1] H. Begbie, *Life of William Booth*, ii. 87.
[2] J. S. Dennis, *Christian Missions and Social Progress*, i. 58.

The Zealots fomented many insurrections, such as that under Judas the Gaulonite in 6 A.D., to which reference is made in Acts v. 37. Jesus was a boy of about thirteen years when this rising occurred, and He must have been familiar with its cause and purpose, as well as with the fanatical violence which characterized the Zealot party. In fact He lived His whole life in this atmosphere of politico-religious unrest, and it is therefore highly probable that the form of His teaching was in part determined by this circumstance. If we read His sayings about resistance to evil in the light of these revolutionary movements, we can understand better their uncompromising nature. Members of the Zealot party would often be among His hearers, and their doctrines had probably infected considerable sections of the populace. It was impossible for Jesus to ignore this element in the nation, seeing that His aim and theirs was the same, namely to set up the Messianic Kingdom. Hence He opposed them, not only because their idea of the Kingdom was national, as already indicated, but because their methods of violence and revolution were alien to His plan. When, therefore, He deals with cases of personal oppression and insult such as a government official might visit upon individuals, He takes a strong stand on the side of forbearance and submission, as an antidote to the violent retaliatory spirit and method of the Zealots. That He had such people as the Zealots in mind is probable from Matt. v. 41, where He says, 'Whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him twain.' This refers to the government practice of commandeering individuals for pressing duty, such as the imperial messenger service. The Zealots would be the first to resist such demands on the principle that opposition to the rulers of the nation would hasten the Kingdom. But Jesus repudiated this method of retaliation as being hostile to the interests of the Kingdom, and alien to the spirit of its genuine members. The strong and definite way in which He seems to proclaim a doctrine of non-resistance in these cases is perhaps due, not only to the eager violence of the Zealot spirit, but also to the fact that their resistance was excited as much by hatred to the Romans as by religious considerations. Such acts of personal retaliation and violent hatred could never advance the Kingdom, and so were prohibited by Jesus for all time.

2. We shall do Simon no injustice if we suppose that his motives for discipleship were not at first of a deeply spiritual character. So far as we can gather, all the disciples interpreted the Messiahship of Jesus according to current materialistic standards. They looked for a King who should establish a visible Messianic Kingdom. Even after the Resurrection they are reported as saying, 'Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' Now in view of Simon's hopes and ideals, is it not extremely likely that it was this very conception of Messiahship that led him to cast in his lot with the Prophet of Nazareth? No doubt the wonder and the winsomeness of Jesus influenced him deeply; but it is probable that at first the dominant motive was political. Simon was a Zealot; he longed to see his nation free from a hated foreign yoke; he believed most firmly in the Divine destiny of Israel. All he needed was a Leader whom he might follow, if necessary, to death. In Jesus he thought he saw this Leader. Here was the Chosen of God, the long-expected One! In this Jesus Israel should be free! Is it too much to suppose that it was with such thoughts in his mind that he hastened to the Mighty One whom John the Baptist had foretold and to whom he had pointed?

Simon's mental and spiritual development must have meant for him intense pain.

(1) First of all it meant disillusionment. His was that hardest of all experiences—to see one's hopes die, to brood over the ashes of what was once a fire. Simon came to see that Jesus had no intention of ever becoming the darling of a revolution; that while his Master was a patriot, His patriotism was not of the kind which flamed within his own breast. Dr. Gore has spoken of the way in which our Lord's words concerning Jerusalem must have fallen on Simon's ears. How eagerly he must have listened! 'But when ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know . . .' Know what? Can we not see him waiting? 'Then know that her desolation is at hand.' 'Desolation'! What a chill word for the burning heart of a revolutionary! 'Desolation'! Why! Simon had been dreaming of her freedom and her future glory! Or take, again, the scene where our Lord weeps over the city. Month after month Simon had been hoping that one day Jesus

would vindicate Himself. When doubt arose he had silenced it with the thought, 'He is biding His time; the hour is not yet come.' When therefore Jesus rode in triumph towards Jerusalem, Simon's heart must have beat high. 'Blessed is the king that cometh in the name of the Lord,' cried the multitude, and above the rest one can hear the voice of Simon. How great, then, must have been his disappointment when Jesus beheld the city from the Mount of Olives. Instead of exulting, Jesus weeps; instead of uttering proud words of victory, He speaks of siege, assault, massacre, doom. 'If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, when thine enemies shall cast up a bank about thee . . . and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.'

(2) It speaks volumes for Simon that disillusionment was followed by enlightenment. Had he been a weaker man he might have turned away in despair. But Simon was made of nobler stuff. He could bear what few men can bear—the shock of a tragic disappointment. He gained a new world-view. It is not unlikely that he was among the first to see the wider purpose of Jesus. The very intensity of his disappointment would contribute to this. Such blows, if overcome, must be overcome quickly, and there is no half-way house. Simon can hardly have been a man for half-measures or for hesitation. He could not shake off the spell of Jesus, and he knew that Jesus was a patriot. He was compelled, therefore, to take up a new attitude, to rise to a patriotism which knows not boundaries because it is founded on love and lives by service.

¶ Dr. John Ker distinguishes between the fanatic and the enthusiast. 'The fanatic,' he says, 'has a hot head and a cool heart; the enthusiast a warm heart and a head that may be cold or warm. The enthusiast will go to the martyr's pile; the fanatic will kindle it. But sometimes they meet in one. Richard Cameron was an enthusiast; Philip the Second a fanatic; Ignatius Loyola was both.' Before Jesus drew to Himself Simon the Cananæan, he was a fanatic, living in accord with his relentless watchword, 'No tax but the Temple tax; no lawgiver but Moses; no king but Jehovah.' But after Jesus set His heart on him and made all things new, Simon was an enthusiast.[1]

3. Simon's story illustrates the changes wrought by contact with Jesus. What was the change produced in Simon? It was the change from a warm-hearted, but narrow and violent nationalism to the world-wide imperialism of Jesus. Jesus was patriotic in the truest sense of the term. All that was best in Jewish history and tradition He loved with a true regard. His lament, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets and stoneth them that are sent unto her!' is the cry of a patriot as well as of a prophet. But the difference between Simon's patriotism and that of Jesus is manifest. That of Simon began with Judah and ended there. It was doubtless of the species, 'My country right or wrong.' The patriotism of Jesus began with Israel, but it ended with all the world. There can be little doubt that it was to this world-view that Simon at length came. He was patriotic to the end, but his patriotism must have come to be what Bolingbroke described when he said, 'Patriotism is founded in great principles and supported by great virtues.' The point is that contact with Jesus means growth of every kind. It means mental awakening as well as moral upheaval. It means the clear eye as well as the clean heart, the death of stupidity as well as the conquest of sin. There is no part of our being that is not refreshed, enlightened, invigorated, when we let the Christ in. 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.'

¶ I have heard of an old and white-haired man who was standing fascinated in a picture gallery before a picture of the Christ. After gazing at it a few moments he murmured, as if to himself, with face all aglow, 'Bless Him, I love Him.' A stranger standing near overheard him, and said, 'Brother, I love Him too,' and clasped his hand. A third caught the sentence, and said, 'I love Him too,' and soon there was in front of that picture a little company of people with hand clasped in hand, utter strangers to one another, but made one by their common love to Jesus Christ. A common love to Christ will issue in the clasped hand between man and man and nation

[1] A. Smellie, *In the Secret Place*, 261.

and nation. And so, with the noise of strife and the clash of arms in my ears, I yet look forward to the time when strife shall end and wars shall cease, when all the antagonisms and hates that divide and sunder men shall be utterly abolished —when every partition wall shall be broken down, and every separating chasm shall be filled up. When shall that happy time come? It shall come, as the prophet says, 'when the knowledge of the Lord has covered the earth as the waters cover the sea.' The Christ who reconciled Matthew and Simon can reconcile any one and every one, so that there shall be neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, but all shall be one man in Christ Jesus.[1]

The Blessedness of the Poor.

Luke vi. 20.—'Blessed are ye poor.'

1. THIS is the first of the Beatitudes. In Matthew's Gospel it is different: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit.' The difference is twofold. There is, first of all, a difference of *form*. In Luke the Beatitude is given in the form of a direct, personal address—'Blessed are *ye* poor'; in Matthew it is given in the form of a general maxim—'Blessed are the poor in spirit.'

There is, secondly, what appears to be at first sight a serious and radical difference in *meaning*. In Luke the blessing seems to be pronounced upon *material poverty*, 'Blessed are ye *poor*.' In Matthew the Beatitude has an exclusively *spiritual* reference, 'Blessed are the poor *in spirit*.'

(1) Now the difference in literary form need not cause us any difficulty. Some scholars, it is true, have set these two accounts side by side, and, assuming that both could not possibly be correct, have proceeded to discuss the question—'In what form did Christ utter this Beatitude? which of the two reports is the verbatim report?' But these discussions are quite needless and superfluous, and often make one wish that commentators had as much common-sense as they have ingenuity and learning. For there is not the slightest need to assume that if Matthew is right Luke must be wrong, and *vice versa*. Both may be right.

For this sermon was not a sermon delivered once, and then laid aside. It was Christ's 'travelling' sermon. Dealing as it does with the fundamental principles and laws of the Kingdom He had come to establish, this sermon had, at any rate in substance, to be repeated in every town and village to which Christ went preaching the gospel of the Kingdom. Now the extempore preacher never preaches twice exactly alike. He may preach the same sermon, he may follow exactly the same line of thought, he may give utterance to the very same truths—but some slight difference in phraseology is almost certain to occur. Jesus was a preacher of that kind, and it seems to be a perfectly natural supposition that when Matthew heard the sermon Christ may have given the Beatitude in the form of a general maxim, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit'; and when Luke heard it He may have adopted the direct and personal form, 'Blessed are ye poor.'

(2) But the second difficulty is more serious. In Matthew's account the blessing is pronounced upon people who are in a certain spiritual condition; but in Luke the emphasis seems to be laid on mere outward circumstances. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit,' says Matthew; 'Blessed are ye poor,' says Luke. It is Luke's version that causes the difficulty, and it is to that we must give careful and particular attention. On a superficial glance it does seem as if, according to Luke's account, Christ attaches His blessing to material poverty; it does seem as if Christ bestows upon the poor man in virtue of his poverty a title to the privileges of the Kingdom of God. Interpreting the verse thus, men and women in their thousands have embraced a life of voluntary poverty, in order to bring themselves, as they supposed, within the sweep of this benediction.

2. On general principles such an interpretation, however unmistakable it may seem, must be wrong, because it runs counter to the whole spirit of the New Testament. Blessedness—happiness—according to the New Testament never depends upon circumstances, but always upon character; never upon outward condition, but always upon inward spirit. Sir Henry Wotton's noble little poem sets forth this truth:

> How happy is he born and taught,
> That serveth not another's will;

[1] J. D. Jones, *The Glorious Company of the Apostles*, 215.

Whose armour is his honest thought
And simple truth his utmost skill!

Who hath his life from rumours freed,
Whose conscience is his strong retreat;
Whose state can neither flatterers feed,
Nor ruin make oppressors great;

—This man is freed from servile bands
Of hope to rise, or fears to fall:
Lord of himself, though not of lands;
And having nothing, yet hath all.

But does Luke's account demand this interpretation? Notice that the benediction does not read, 'Blessed are the poor,' as it certainly would have done if Christ meant that the state of poverty was in itself a blessed state. It reads, 'Blessed are *ye* poor.' Christ does not state it as a general principle that the poor are blessed, but He pronounces His benediction on those poor people who were listening to Him just then. He does not say that all the poor in Palestine or all the poor throughout the world are blessed, but He pronounces His benediction on those people listening to Him in whom poverty and suffering had created the need of Divine consolation—those poor people who by their very presence in the congregation showed that they were conscious of a great emptiness and want in their souls which none but God could fill. It was not because of their poverty, but because of their sense of need of the Divine pity and comfort which their poverty had created, that Christ pronounced these people blessed. In a word, we have the essential meaning of Luke's Beatitude, 'Blessed are ye poor,' given to us as a general maxim in Matthew's Beatitude, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit.'

¶ If you are really poor, my daughter, for God's sake be so in spirit; make a virtue of necessity, and turn that precious stone Poverty to its true value. The brilliancy thereof is not perceived in this world, but nevertheless it is very great.[1]

3. We see the harmony between Matthew's 'poor in spirit' and Luke's 'poor' when we trace the history of the words for 'poor' in the Old Testament. For they have a long history behind them, and that history is indeed one of the most important links between the Old Testament and the New. There is a whole group of words connected with poverty which is very prominent throughout the Old Testament, but especially in the Psalms. Literal poverty or indigence is expressed by the word that is most often translated 'needy.' There is another word that means rather 'weak' or 'feeble,' literally 'thin' or 'lean,' like the 'lean kine' of Pharaoh's dream. But the words that have the most religious significance are two that in the Hebrew are very like each other in form and sound. This close resemblance has led to their being rather often confused in the MSS., so that one appears in the Hebrew text and the other in the margin. In English the distinction is naturally more strongly marked. The word which in AV and RV is most commonly rendered 'meek' is translated by Dr. Driver 'humble,' as 'of one who humbles or submits himself voluntarily, especially under the hand of God.' Comparing the two words, Dr. Driver says that in meaning they 'differ materially, that rendered "poor" denoting one *humbled* involuntarily by external circumstances, while this (which is translated "meek") denotes one who is voluntarily *humble* himself: nevertheless they do not differ greatly in application, especially in the Psalms, both being designations of the pious servants of Jehovah, the one term describing them from the point of view of their external condition, the other from that of their mental character or disposition.'

As time passed the tendency was for the rich to be also the more worldly, the more open to pagan influences, the more ready to adopt the manners and customs which went with this new and seductive civilization. The rich were the freethinkers, the careless and unscrupulous. The faithful adherents of the Old Law were found mainly among the poor. And the tendency was for the quiet religious souls to be found among the scattered poor. Among the godly there were two types: those who congregated in cities and lent each other mutual support by forming the party of the Pharisees, and the religious people who lived more in retirement and isolation, described in Psalm xxxv. 20 as those who are 'quiet in the land.' In the earlier days, especially throughout the third century and the first quarter of the second century B.C., before the Pharisees had hardened down into what they became later,

[1] St. Francis de Sales.

the boundary line between the two classes would still be very fluid. All this time the poor and humble, those who were lowly in their own eyes, were so conspicuously God's people that there came to be a tendency to identify them with the godly. It is remarkable how many of the Psalms seem to have been written from this point of view. The rich, the worldly, the latitudinarian and Hellenizing party are the oppressors, and the poor and humble, the pious servants of Jehovah, are the oppressed.

4. We understand, then, that our Lord did not mean to pronounce the poor, hungry, and weeping 'blessed' simply in virtue of their poverty, hunger, and tears. The connection between these classes and the Kingdom of Heaven and its blessings is not quite so immediate. Yet Christ was not mocking His hearers with idle words. He spoke gravely, sincerely, having weighty truths in His mind, every one of which it much concerned the children of want and sorrow to know. One of these, the most immediately obvious, was that the classes addressed were in His heart, that He cared for them, sympathized with them, desired their well-being, in a word, that He was the poor man's Friend. This at least is implied in the opening sentence of the sermon, 'Blessed are ye poor.' The mere fact that this was the opening sentence was most significant. It showed how near the poor lay to the Speaker's heart, that at least they had the blessing of His most earnest sympathy. Surely a thing not to be despised! In those days the poor were many, and their state was very abject, and they had few friends. They pined through a dreary existence unheeded, their misery unalleviated by the charities of Christian civilization. But here was One who manifestly pitied and loved them. He is a great prophet and sage, whose words command the attention of all, and His first word is to the poor! Why, His love and pity were in themselves a gospel unspeakably soothing and comforting. Then how suggestive such love in such a Man: this union of humanity with wisdom! How much it imports that the Great Teacher is also the poor man's Friend! One might have feared that the poor would be beneath His notice; that He would pass them by as people for whom He could do nothing, and of whom He could make nothing; too engrossed with sordid cares to become the disciples of wisdom. Surely the poor man's era is coming; an era in which the poor not merely shall be cared for, but shall learn to think new thoughts of themselves and their state—learn that though a man be poor he is still a man, and may possess most real riches though destitute of silver and gold.

The Poor and the Rich.

Luke vi. 20.—'Blessed are ye poor.'
Luke vi. 24.—'But woe unto you that are rich.'

Of all the Evangelists Luke is the one who has preserved most of our Lord's words about poverty and riches. The happiness of poverty and the woe and peril of wealth are truths by which he is deeply impressed. He is the only Evangelist who tells of the man who wanted Jesus to divide the inheritance over which he had quarrelled with his brother; the only one who tells the story of the rich man who had much goods laid up for many years and who was just preparing to enjoy them when God said to him, Thou fool; the only one who writes, Give alms and all things shall be clean unto you; the only one who tells us of the rich man and Lazarus, and of the publican Zacchæus who gave half his goods to the poor and won the hearty approval of Jesus. In his later Book of Acts we see the same interest and the same spirit. He records with admiration the brotherly love of the early Church, and looks with reverent affection on a society where no one said that any of the things he possessed was his own.

It is not the truth that all poor men are good and all rich men bad, but it is the truth that Jesus thought the ordinary poor man's prospect of being good was greater than the ordinary rich man's. What we are afraid of is being poor; what He was afraid of was being rich. He speaks of something called 'the deceitfulness of riches.' There is no goodness or salvation save in truth, but riches delude. They give a man confidence in his own judgment; he values himself by them; unconsciously he feels as if he were as much better than others as he is richer than they; he is tempted to judge others harshly and to set down all poverty to incapacity or even to bad character; he does not come under obligations to his fellows, at least he thinks so, and he easily forgets his obligations to God. He grows at the same time irreligious

and inhuman. There is not indeed any necessity that this should be so, but there is great danger of it, and the result is quite common. It is so common that all through the Old Testament, especially in the Psalms, the true people of God are designated by names like 'the poor,' 'the meek,' 'the humble,' 'the quiet in the land'; while the rich, the unjust, the heartless oppressor, are practically synonymous. This is the mind of Jesus also. 'How hardly,' He says, 'shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!' It is the poor that have all the chances in their favour; to put it paradoxically, it is those whom we count unhappy to whom happiness truly belongs. If we had our choice we should rather be the rich man than Lazarus, but Jesus would rather have been Lazarus than the rich man. We think that a man's life consists in the abundance of the things which he possesses, but Jesus simply denies this. And He denied it because He knew. No one ever had such fullness of life as Jesus. It satisfied Himself. It has satisfied ever since all who have shared in it. Yet He did not own a penny, and had not where to lay His head. It is only when we understand this that we can understand the Beatitudes.

1. 'Blessed are the poor.' So our Lord declared; and in so declaring, it was no dogmatic requirement that He was making. He was not imposing a decision or choice of His own in selecting and blessing the poor. Rather, it was a conclusion come to, a deliberate verdict of experience, an announcement of fact. He has passed in and out of these moving multitudes. He has noted them at their work, and in their homes, in the field and in the town, at their fishing and ploughing, on the uplands with the flocks, in the crowded markets of the great cities. He has taken stock of them. He has approached them, and examined, and sifted, and tested, and sampled. He has made direct appeals to them. He has brought His own pressure to bear on them. He has tried what He could make of them; and how they would serve His high purpose; and whether they would understand His mind; and how they could be fitted for His Kingdom. He has been searching for the best human service that He could obtain; and He has been seeking for opportunities in which to forward the cause of God the Father. He has tried them, as gold and silver: He has put them to proof under the fire of His love. And, out of all this, He who had that strange power of knowing what was in man makes His final announcement, declares His judgment: 'Blessed are the poor.' It is a verdict.

There is something that He has found in the poor which He could not find elsewhere. There is a certain receptivity, a sensitiveness, a response, which is the peculiarity, the note, which poverty brings with it. The spirit is more on the alert in the poor; it stirs more readily to the touch of God; it is less cumbered, less reluctant, less stupid and stolid and obstructive, than with those who have more of this world's goods. If the Word of God is in movement about the world, it finds its friends among the poor. With them lies its readier greeting. Channels are more free down which the Spirit can pass. Ears are more open to catch the great secret. The heart beats more quickly, and the soul wakes more easily, at the sound of the Divine call. The poor seem to live nearer to the spiritual realities; they are more aware of the far horizon; they are less closely imprisoned in the narrow house of the present. They are less preoccupied, less clogged and choked and stifled. Therefore it is that they rise to the call. They respond to the pressure, they commit themselves to the venture, with a finer freedom than any. You are sure of their sympathy and help. The cause of the Kingdom finds in them its first and best friends.

So it was in Christ's experience. And in this He was but verifying and ratifying the age-long verdict of the Scriptures. Throughout the long record of God's dealings with the Chosen People, all would have been lost if it had not been for those who were pre-eminently named 'the poor.' Psalmist and Prophet bear one continual witness that it was they who saved the Day. It was always their eyes that saw, their hearts that opened. They were sure to detect God at His work. They heard the voice that said, 'This is the way, walk ye in it.' St. Paul did but sum up one long and familiar story when he cried, 'Not many mighty; not many strong; not many wise; but the weak things of this world hath God chosen.'

God chose them because they proved themselves fit for His choice. By 'the poor'—by the humble remnant who met in secret and spoke often to one

another—His counsel had been cherished and His message handed on. Something in their poverty, in their simplicity, in their humility, qualified them to be the best instruments for His service, the first heralds of His purpose, the first to receive and welcome His consummating joy. Yes! an unbroken experience testifies to the Lord's final verdict: 'Blessed are the poor.'

¶ Poverty of any kind places us in our proper relation to God, while riches of any kind, mind or money, tends to sever us from Him.[1]

A mistress strange, forsooth,
In very truth
One that few men have looked to find.
Her garments stained with age a russet hue;
Her naked feet besprent with silver dew;
Her hair unbound, untrammelled to the wind.

Lonely she strays
Down forest-ways,
Men shun her coming, all unheeding pass;
Yet simple creatures of the wood and field
To her soft pleading yield,
And play unchecked around her in the grass.

Yet some have met her on the bare hillside,
Some marked her passing by the silver tide;
Some glimpsed her in the city's busy street,
Who, seeing, straight have loved,
And, yielding all, have proved
The Lady Poverty a mistress sweet.[2]

2. As for the rich, if it were not that we have been accustomed to read the New Testament from our childhood, we should be struck with the warnings which it contains against not only the love of riches but the very possession of them; we should wonder with a portion of that astonishment which the Apostles at first felt, who had been brought up in the notion that riches were a chief reward which God bestowed on those He loved. As it is, we have heard the solemn declarations so continually that we have ceased to attach any distinct meaning to them; or, if our attention is at any time drawn more closely to them, we soon dismiss the subject on some vague imagination that what is said in Scripture had a reference to the particular times when Christ came, without attempting to settle its exact application to us, or whether it has any such application at all—as if the circumstance that the interpretation requires care and thought were an excuse for giving no thought or care whatever to the settling of it.

But, even if we had ever so little concern in the Scripture denunciations against riches and the love of riches, the very awfulness of them might have seemed enough to save them from neglect; just as the flood, and the judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah, are still dwelt upon by Christians with solemn attention, though we have a promise against the recurrence of the one, and trust we shall never be so deserted by God's grace as to call down upon ourselves the other. And this consideration may lead a man to suspect that the neglect in question does not arise entirely from unconcern, but from a sort of misgiving that the subject of riches is one which cannot be safely or comfortably discussed by the Christian world at this day; that is, which cannot be discussed without placing the claims of God's Law and the pride of life in visible and perplexing opposition.

Let us then see what the letter of Scripture says on the subject. For instance, consider the text. 'Woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation.' The words are sufficiently clear, it will not be denied, as spoken of rich persons in our Saviour's day. Let the full force of the word 'consolation' be observed. It is used by way of contrast to the comfort which is promised to the Christian in the list of Beatitudes. Comfort, in the fullness of that word, as including help, guidance, encouragement, and support, is the peculiar promise of the gospel. The promised Spirit who has taken Christ's place was called by Him 'the Comforter.' There is then something very fearful in the intimation of the text, that those who have riches thereby receive their portion, such as it is, in full, instead of the Heavenly gift of the gospel. The same doctrine is implied in our Lord's words in the parable of Dives and Lazarus: 'Son, remember thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.' At another time He said to His disciples, 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.'

[1] J. Rendel Harris, *The Life of Francis William Crossley*, 61.

[2] H. L. Hubbard, *Epiphanies*, 10

Now, it is usual to dismiss such passages with the remark that they are directed, not against those who have, but against those who trust in, riches; as if, forsooth, they implied no connexion between the having and the trusting, no warning lest the possession led to the idolatrous reliance on them, no necessity for fear and anxiety in the possessors lest they should become castaways. And this irrelevant distinction is supposed to find countenance in our Lord's own language on one of the occasions above referred to, in which He first says, 'How hardly shall they that *have* riches,' then, 'How hard it is for them that *trust* in riches to enter into the kingdom of God'; whereas, surely, He only removes His disciples' false impression, that the bare circumstance of possessing wealth was inconsistent with a state of salvation, and no more interprets *having* by *trusting* than He makes *trusting* essential to *having*. He conneets the two, without identifying, without explaining away; and the simple question which lies for our determination is this—whether, considering that they who had riches when Christ came were likely in His judgment idolatrously to trust in them, there is, or is not, reason for thinking that this likelihood varies materially in different ages; and according to the solution of this question must we determine the application to these times of the woe pronounced in the text. And, at all events, let it be observed that it is for those who would make out that these passages do *not* apply now to give their reasons for their opinion; the burden of proof is with them. Till they draw their clear and reasonable distinctions between the first and the twentieth century, the denunciation hangs over the world—that is, as much as over the Pharisees and Sadducees at our Lord's coming.

(1) The most obvious danger which worldly possessions present to our spiritual welfare is, that they become practically a substitute in our hearts for that One Object to which our supreme devotion is due. They are present; God is unseen. They are means at hand of effecting what we want: whether God will hear our petitions for those wants is uncertain, or, rather, certain in the negative. Thus they minister to the corrupt inclinations of our nature; they promise and are able to be gods to us, and such gods, too, as require no service, but, like dumb idols, exalt the worshipper, impressing him with a notion of his own power and security. And in this consists their chief and most subtle mischief. Religious men are able to repress, nay extirpate, sinful desires, the lust of the flesh and of the eyes, gluttony, drunkenness, and the like, love of amusements and frivolous pleasures and display, indulgence in luxuries of whatever kind; but as to wealth, they cannot easily rid themselves of a secret feeling that it gives them a footing to stand upon, an importance, a superiority, and in consequence they get attached to this world, lose sight of the duty of bearing the Cross, become dull and dim-sighted, and lose their delicacy and precision of touch, are numbed (so to say) in their fingers' ends as regards religious interests and prospects. To risk all upon Christ's word seems to them somehow unnatural, extravagant, and evidences a morbid excitement; and death, instead of being a gracious, however awful, release, is not a welcome subject of thought. They are content to remain as they are, and do not contemplate a change. They desire and mean to serve God, nay actually do serve Him in their measure; but not with the keen sensibilities, the noble enthusiasm, the grandeur and elevation of soul, the dutifulness and affectionateness towards Christ which become a Christian.

(2) The danger of *possessing* riches is the carnal security to which they lead; that of 'desiring' and *pursuing* them is, that an object of this world is thus set before us as the aim and end of life. It seems to be the will of Christ that His followers should have no aim or end, pursuit or business, merely of this world. We may be engaged in worldly business, without pursuing worldly objects; 'not slothful in business,' yet 'serving the Lord.' In this, then, consists the danger of the pursuit of gain, as by trade and the like. It is the most common and widely extended of all excitements. It is one in which almost everyone may indulge, and, indeed, will be praised by the world for so doing. And it lasts through life; in that differing from the amusements and pleasures of the world, which are short-lived, and succeed one after the other. Dissipation of mind which these amusements create is itself indeed miserable enough: but far worse than this dissipation is the concentration of mind upon some worldly object which admits of being constantly

pursued; and such is the pursuit of gain. Nor is it a slight aggravation of the evil that anxiety is almost sure to attend it. A life of money-getting is a life of care; from the first there is a fearful anticipation of loss in various ways to depress and unsettle the mind; nay to haunt it, till a man finds he can think about nothing else, and is unable to give his mind to religion because of the constant whirl of business in which he is involved.

There is no excuse for that absorbing pursuit of wealth which many men indulge in as if a virtue, and expatiate upon as if a science. 'After all these things do the Gentiles seek!' Consider how different is the rule of life left us by the Apostles. 'This I speak for your own profit,' says St. Paul, 'that ye may attend upon the Lord, without distraction.' 'This I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.' 'Be anxious for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.' And St. Peter says, 'Casting all your anxiety upon him, for he careth for you.'

¶ Our Lord seems to me to be declaring what He declares in many forms, that for us there is no way of possessing or enjoying anything except by devoting it to a higher service than our own. So long as a man thinks of his possessions, whether wealth, time, or talents, as his own, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven any more than the camel can pass through the eye of a needle. It is only when he feels that he has nothing that he can possess all things. I have no doubt that this is the keystone of Christian morality; but I feel the difficulty of making such a high ideal square with the facts of daily life. One must also observe that the great mass of Christians have no intellectual perception of this truth, though they may more or less feel it. The ordinary rich man has the most fantastic notions of the 'rights of property.' In many cases he devotes it to the gratification of his own whims without the least regard to the effect of his expenditure on other people. He has oddly enough persuaded himself that these rights of property do not cease when the property has ceased to be in any sense his, when in fact, as far as the property is concerned, he has ceased to exist. He is quite indignant when he hears of laws limiting the power of testators or abrogating some decree of an ordinary mortal who lived in the 16th century. No one contends for the right of parliament to settle anything in perpetuity, and yet some people suppose such a right to be vested in the dullest blockhead who gets hold of £1,000 and can keep it till he dies.[1]

> It decks me only to mock me, this jewelled chain of mine.
> It bruises me when on my neck, it strangles me when I struggle to tear it off.
> It grips my throat, it chokes my singing.
>
> Could I but offer it to your hand, my Lord, I would be saved.
>
> Take it from me, and in exchange bind me to you with a garland, for I am ashamed to stand before you with this jewelled chain on my neck.[2]

The Son of Man.

Luke vi. 22.—'For the Son of man's sake.'

This is the first recorded occasion on which our Lord used the title 'the Son of man' of Himself. What did He mean by it?

The title has a double significance, which must be combined in a true interpretation. It seems to signify, on the one hand, the humiliation of God to humanity, and on the other hand the exaltation of humanity to God. And although none of the Apostles ever ventured to give to our Lord this title which was His own, and which seemed appropriate only upon His lips, there is perhaps no passage which more literally describes the double significance of the title, 'Son of man,' than Philippians ii., where it is said that Christ was made in the form of a man and humbled Himself, and for that reason was highly exalted above every man that has come among men.

Among modern interpreters and prophets there is none who has more truly caught the meaning of this remarkable self-designation of our Lord

[1] F. Storr, *Life and Remains of the Rev. R. H. Quick*, 475.

[2] R. Tagore, *Fruit-Gathering*, 13.

than Browning. Especially is this so in that familiar passage of the poem, 'Saul,' where the young singer, David, is attempting to soothe the disordered mind of the king. As the lad ranges from subject to subject in search of consolation and restoration for the king, his heart begins to glow towards the sufferer, and he begins to infer that if he, David, can love Saul, the king, with such disinterested love, how far more must the Divine love reach out towards the conquered and fallen man! And from that line of thought David passes on to the notion that God will reach out to the man, and will reach out to the man in a human form.

'Tis the weakness in strength, that I cry for! my flesh, that I seek
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever: a Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!

1. By 'the Son of man' Christ meant to intimate that He was the Ideal of humanity, and consequently, from Him as the Ideal of humanity has flowed that conception of the very word humanity which is peculiarly Christian; for, of course, the word 'human' and the word 'humane' are the same words, drawn from the one Latin word, *humanus;* and we have discriminated between and written the two words in a different way in order to bring out the distinctively Christian idea; for what was human meant all that is human, but what is humane means the ideal humanity rather than the actual.

There is an ancient and well-known story told of the Greek cynic philosopher: that he once searched the streets of Athens with a lantern, and declared he was in search of a man. And there is a passage in Jeremiah v. which is very similar. Seek, it says, if ye can find a man in the streets of Jerusalem. And a much more recent prophet, Emerson, has suggested the same thought in very familiar words: 'The men we see in each other do not give us the image and likeness of man. We have never yet seen a man. We do not know the majestic manliness that belongs to him; there are no divine persons with us, and the multitude do not hasten to be divine.' There are no divine persons with us unless the Son of Man is Divine. And the multitude do not hasten to become divine unless they are in the foot-prints of the Son of Man.

(1) We are always looking, as it were, at the ideal of the man, and always shamed and sorrowed with the discovery that the real man is different. Now, when Jesus Christ says He is the Son of Man, He slips to our side and says to us, 'Are you seeking for a man? I that speak unto thee am He.'

(2) We are always seeking for companionship, and the disappointment of life to most of us is that our ideal companions prove to be commonplace, or, if ideal, are quickly removed, and we become conscious of the solitude of the life, because those whom we have lived with, and have thought most of, are just those we may not remain with, or those of whom our thoughts have to change. And there is also, of course, the solitude which comes from the very indefiniteness of the Divine Being, the solitude of that Infinite Being whom we never grasp, whose face we never see, whose Personality is never well within our touch, a subject of our thought rather than a matter of our experience. And, then, when the burden and the sorrow of life are upon us, Christ comes to our side and says that He is the Son of Man; and that means the companion of each—'I that speak unto thee am He.'

(3) We always seem to see a society which is perfect in the imagination, but we never seem to get conscious of being in it; although, of course, we must be in it or on the borders of it constantly. We read some old literature of Greece, luminous and joyous; we remember such a statement as that made by one of the great French writers, that the Greek poet sings of humanity at the point where it liberates itself from the sombre fatalities and directs itself towards the light. But then, we say, how slowly it liberates itself from these sombre fatalities and how constantly the fatalities gather round it again—dense clouds of the old misery of the world in a new form; and how slowly it directs itself towards the light, and how little progress it makes towards the light. And then in that social unrest, in that dream that

is not realized, we touch this word again of the Son of Man, 'I that speak unto thee am he.'

(4) And, just to mention one other of those thoughts which are constantly with us all, we are constantly demanding, as it were, the issue, the conclusion of our earthly life, a judgment that shall be passed on real grounds and not imaginary, a judgment passed upon character not upon creed, upon action not upon profession. We demand that life shall reach a goal definite and tangible, and it never does, or we fancy it never does; and the trouble of that uncertain future casts a shadow over this certain present. And then again the Son of Man comes, seated, as He puts it, upon the clouds of heaven, and before Him are gathered all the nations of the earth, and He judges in that way, on that principle, 'I that speak unto thee am He.'

2. But, now, from the Son of Man as the Ideal of humanity has grown and is growing the new meaning of humanity itself. Humanity no longer means merely all that is human; it means something which is not merely human, it means the humane.

The other day a tramp entered a casual ward and took his place on one of the benches, and an old sick man who was in the ward drew towards him and spoke to him and said, 'Where do you come from?' 'I come from the country,' he said. 'From which country?' 'I come from Kent.' 'Oh! that is my country,' said the man. 'How did it look when you left it?' 'Well,' said the new arrival, 'there was rain over the country, but there was a rainbow, too.' And the old man said, 'Thank you; I wanted a word of comfort, and you have given it me.' There comes into this sad casual ward of human life the Son of Man, and we creep to His feet, saying, 'Whence comest Thou?' He tells us, and we say, 'That is my country; how does that country look?' 'The rain is over it, but there is a rainbow,' He replies. And we say, 'We wanted that word of comfort, and Thou hast given it.' Humanity comes to ask, not for man as he is, but for the ideal man that is possible; and He is presented to us in the form of the Son of Man whom we call Christ.[1]

[1] R. F. Horton.

The Woe of the Rich.

Luke vi. 24.—'Woe unto you that are rich.'

1. God made the world in one fashion, and men are always busy trying to make it over after a fashion of their own. God made the world on the principle that with steady labour and steady saving there will be just enough to keep men active, but never enough to afford them luxurious ease. There will be no superfluities, and luxuries will be so called because of their rarity. A strange fact is that each community, no matter how great its aggregate wealth, always lives from hand to mouth. If the community stops working a season the whole body suffers severely. The nations have been labouring since time began, and have opened mines of diamonds, silver, and gold; yet what has man now to show for his labour and his treasures? He might say with Ecclesiastes, 'Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was no profit under the sun' (ii. 11). If the riches of one nation had passed to another, there would be enough in the world to-day to make each man comfortable. But it seems that with the nation its accumulation dies. Ancient treasures have vanished. Each nation begins life in hardship and works slowly to a maturity of comfort. The nations of the past contribute little more than their experience, and not all of that, to the building up of the new. This is a wonderful condition of things. It shows us that we shall never have a nation of millionaires, or a nation where men will have enough to make work unnecessary. It makes plain the fact that the multiplication of gold and silver cannot multiply the number of drones beyond a certain point, and the other fact that money cannot take the place of labour. The old law holds good at this moment, that man must earn his bread in the sweat of his brow. Thus has God planned for man. In consequence the workers are the real people of the world; they have the health, cheerfulness, and sanity of life, and the powers of society are really wielded by them.

2. Unfortunately men have never believed in the beauty of God's way; its wisdom has never

been understood by them. The dream of men is to become rich, and each youth sets out to secure a fortune. The ideal is to have plenty of money, which is supposed to buy every enjoyment, and often happiness. Hence the mad pursuit of riches which has marked every race, and seems to increase in madness as the race grows older and opportunities of wealth multiply. It is not to be wondered at that the pagan should seek wealth, since his life is concerned only with this world; but who will explain the fever for gold that consumes so many Christians? Do they forget the clear declarations of Christ on the matter of riches? 'But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation.' 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!' For 'it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.' No, these sayings are not forgotten, but they are interpreted pleasantly. The interpretation means in the end that Christ did not speak literally. The Christian continues his pursuit of riches to the destruction of his virtue, of the practice of religion, and often of his faith. The lesson of history is never learned—that the majority of men will ever remain poor. Even if it were remembered, numbers would regard life as a lottery, and work just as hard for the mere excitement of winning a prize. What man, even with the words of Christ ringing in his ears like the last trumpet, would refuse a fortune were it offered to him?

¶ What was the danger of the possession of wealth in the eyes of Christ? What makes it so hard for the rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God? The danger and the difficulty both lie in the tendency of wealth to breed a spirit of self-satisfaction and contentment, a spirit which infects the soul with indifference, kills all high aspiration, deadens the sense of need, and even in human relationships leads to selfishness. Nor am I speaking now of great wealth as we understand that phrase in the modern world. The collection of huge wealth into the hands of one individual was probably not known to Jesus, or even if it was known, it was no danger to the men to whom He spoke. And we should go very far astray in our interpretation of His words if we imagined that His warning as to the perils of riches applies only to millionaires. In truth, it applies to all who are living in circumstances of ease and comfort, and whose habits of life tend to deaden their sense of need.[1]

3. Undoubtedly this money-madness must have a bad effect on its victims. While the fever is on them men work madly and scheme unscrupulously to reach their ambition. Labour becomes a curse to them, rather than the happy exercise of their faculties. Tied to their treadmill, with eyes fixed on the dollars rolling in, they have no leisure to live. The goal-bird leads a happy life compared to them. Their minds, consciences, souls become the slaves of their ruling passion, and they see all things from God to nothingness in its terrific light. Whether the result be wealth or poverty, the effect on them is the same. In time the money-madness differentiates its victims into slaves, drones, and thieves, with as many varieties as individuals. The slaves are not always voluntary, but they are directly or indirectly the victims of the money-making spirit. The poor wretches who toil night and day in factories, mines, and sweat-shops are urged on one side by their own fever and on the other by the fever of their employer. The drones are the philosophers, or perhaps the clowns of the circus. They are either the children of the rich, busy in spending foolishly what was acquired unjustly; or the shrewd beneficiaries of past injustice reaping carefully now ten times more than their right allows; or the lazy, good-natured crowd, born of nature's protest against false conditions, who live on their friends, relatives, the public, or the country at large. 'For there is a man whose labour is with wisdom, and with knowledge, and with skilfulness; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil.' It is a true saying that one-half of the world lives on the other half. The thieves are the professional robbers, from the common criminal who lives poorly by cheap stealing, up to the magnates who manipulate the markets and remain out of jail by buying beforehand the roads that lead to the jail. Thus the money-madness breeds a thousand injustices every hour, until the plague of flies obscures the sun and leads one to believe there is no justice in the world.

¶ To me the worship of wealth means in the

[1] S. Berry, *Graces of the Christian Character*, 169.

present the crowning of low merit with undeserved honour, the setting of successful villainy above unsuccessful virtue. It means absolute neglect and isolation for the few who follow a high heart's love through want and pain, through evil and good report. It means the bringing of all human resources, material and intellectual, to one dead level of brilliant exhibition, a second 'Field of the Cloth of Gold,' to show that the barbaric love of splendour still lives in man, with the thirst for blood and other quasi-animal passions. It means in the future some such sad downfall as Spain had when the gold and silver of America had gorged her soldiers and nobles; something like what France experienced after Louis XIV. and XV. I am no prophet, and least of all a prophet of evil; but where, oh, where, shall we find the antidote to this metallic poison? Perhaps in the homœopathic principle of cure. When the money miracle shall be complete, when the gold Midas shall have turned everything to gold, then the human heart will cry for flesh and blood, for brain and muscles. Then shall manhood be at a premium and money at a discount.[1]

[1] Julia Ward Howe.

LAUGHTER.

Gn. xxi. 6.—'God hath made me to laugh.'
Pr. xvii. 22.—'A merry heart doeth good like a medicine.'
Ec. ii. 1.—'I will prove thee with mirth.'
Ec. vii. 6.—'As the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool.'
Luke vi. 25.—'Woe unto you that laugh now.

'I WILL prove thee with mirth' is a saying of peculiar wisdom, for laughter is one of the most searching tests of character. If you know how a man laughs and what he laughs at, you know the man. Many good people, however, have got hold of only one end of the test. Base laughter is a foolish and sorrowful thing, so they condemn laughter altogether. Yet laughter of the right sort is one of the finest things in human life. There have been saints who never laughed—but they were not the finest kind of saint.

But it is very necessary to remember that laughter is of two kinds. One is the gift of God: the other is incense to the devil. Let us see how they differ.

I.

The Right Kind of Laughter.

THE faculty of making merry is a Divine endowment. We are intended to enjoy it as part of our inheritance. 'I lay it upon you,' Manning once wrote to Vaughan, 'to read the *Critic* and the *School for Scandal*. You would be holier and happier if you would enter into such things with patience and learn to laugh.' For laughter is meant to be more than a ripple on the stream of conversation which brightens intercourse; it is designed to enter as a vital element into our mental and moral attitude towards life. Faith has its laughter; truth has its laughter; goodness has its laughter. 'God hath made me to laugh,' said Sarah. Laughter is represented in the first book of the Bible, as the gift of God, yet the English puritan shrinks from it as if it were unholy and profane, affirming that all merriment, even the best, is worthless, or comparatively worthless; that laughter is always inferior to tears; that, as Lewis Morris puts it,

> Tears are divine, but mirth is of the earth.

It is a false doctrine, and, like all false doctrines, mischievous. It is a gratuitous assumption for which there is not a particle of evidence. There is overwhelming evidence against it. Tears mean that something is wrong with us; laughter means that we are happy. Surely, if we come to think of it, we shall see it is nothing short of blasphemy to assert that the only gift we receive from God is wretchedness. Moreover, tears are but a temporary accident, attending the earlier and imperfect stages of evolution. There will come a time, the Bible tells us, when there shall be no more tears. That is never said of laughter.

This tradition of the superiority of gloom proceeds largely from the belief that Christ Himself,

our Lord and Master, discouraged laughter and gladness; that a mark of our discipleship therefore ought to be seriousness and solemn gloom. Thus, Farrar, in his very popular *Life of Christ,* says, 'We are never told that Jesus laughed, while we are once told that He wept.' But is a saying like that the whole truth about Christ?

We are told that He was slandered by being called a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber. And it is difficult to see what point there could have been in such an accusation if His demeanour were one to which a smile was unknown. Did not He Himself declare that there was as much difference between His attitude to life and John's —who was the typical ascetic—as there is between a wedding and a funeral? We read in the Gospels of Jesus going to a marriage, and He was a guest at feasts. He watched the merry games of childhood with an interested eye, and the little ones loved Him—a sure sign that He was no kill-joy. Further, in the Gospels there are sayings of Jesus which an orthodox interpretation finds it hard to explain unless on the assumption that they show a vein of humour. The tradition that a religious man must always be grave and sombre, when it attempts to justify itself by the example of Christ, can do so only by taking a one-sided view of His Person and character. Certainly a religious man will not be found, and ought not to be found, sharing in heartless frivolity, or the laugh at misfortune and pain in another. But that is a different thing from excluding sunshine and light-heartedness from religion.

¶ For all the deep seriousness of His words, is it not natural to think that there was something of that quiet laughter which is so nearly akin to tears in Christ's eyes when He spoke of feeding swine with pearls, of camels passing through the eye of a needle, or of a man seeing a splinter in his brother's eye but not perceiving the beam that was in his own?[1]

1. *Good laughter means that our natures are rightly balanced.* Good laughter and the sense of humour that produces it are of all things human the most truly so—human as above animal, not as below Divine. If we read the lives of the saints we find that many—not the least saintly—could laugh; we hear of Saint Francis of Assisi pretending to play the violin with a piece of wood and a ruler to amuse his brethren; of Saint Teresa playing the flute on feast days. And we remember the saying of St. Francis de Sales, 'A saint who is sad is a very poor saint.'

Yet we must distinguish carefully. It would be false to maintain, absolutely at least, that laughter is necessarily a sign of human intelligence, though Dr. Johnson used to say, that 'the size of a man's understanding might always be justly measured by his mirth.' For there is a stupid laughter; also a shrill laughter of the insane; and the almost mechanical laughter of the little child who is tickled. The list of intelligent, therefore truly human, laughters would be quite long; and, sad to say, reprehensible laughter, perhaps, would be found to be most common. Good laughter is healthy, frank, and true; it rings like honest metal; it has the pure sound of a soul at peace with God and man; it is natural and spontaneous, like the rustling of the golden leaves on a clear autumn day, like the song of the brook on the polished pebbles, or like the musical trill of the lark soaring and quivering with sheer delight in the glory of the rising sun. It is a manifestation of mental health—sympathetic and contagious, which means that it is simply and wholly human.

Momerie gives a good differentiation. 'The true merriment may be distinguished from the false by the fact that it bears reflection; we can think of it with pleasure next day and next week.'[1] Dante, who cannot be called a frivolous-minded person, rejoiced in noble laughter, and he gives another test, saying, 'What is laughter but a coruscation of the delight of the soul, that is, an outward visible light answering to that which is within? Therefore, in order to show that his soul is temperate in its joy, a man should laugh temperately, with a becoming seriousness, and without violent gesticulation, so that the soul which then reveals itself may appear modest, not profligate.'[2] Both these differentiations rest on the same point: the true test of laughter is the spirit behind. Laughter to be legitimate must be the child of sympathy and of delight. This is largely because the essence of laughter is triumph. A medical psychologist has remarked that the laugh of all primitive beings, be they children,

[1] A. Alexander, *The Glory in the Grey*, 39.

[1] *Church and Creed*, 211. [2] *Il Convivio*, iii.

savages or lunatics, is invariably associated with an element of cruelty. The child's laugh is one of triumph; it is always *at,* never *with,* a person. But this is not the only kind of triumph; for laughter may come from a victory over one's lower self or one's circumstances. George Eliot goes to the root of the matter. 'That a gratified sense of superiority is at the root of barbarous laughter may be at least half the truth. But there is a loving laughter in which the only recognized superiority is that of the ideal self, the God within, holding the mirror and the scourge for our own pettiness as well as our neighbours'.'[1]

It is because of this that the gift of good laughter is essential to a full and noble humanity. We are human, so far as we can see, in order to fight against odds and conquer them, by way of a training for something further. But there is no sign of victory about a churlish temper, rather a certain signal of defeat: and it is by victories and not defeats that battling men and women are encouraged. Whenever a man is dull and heavy-hearted, so far he has had the worst of it. He has gone out into the world with all its cares, and the world with all its cares has beaten him. And what men feel about the merry heart is that it too has had to bear the common burdens, and has come through it all in a victorious way, so as never to lose the sunshine. The Latin and the Anglo-Celt can laugh under their bitterest tragedy: so they broke Germany and came out of the war still nations. It was not leadership that saved them, but their own iron gaiety. The British Tommy with his ineradicable sense of the ridiculous was a hopeless enigma to the Teuton mind. He could grin under hardships, smile at defeat, crack a joke when writhing in pain, and laugh in the face of death. 'Look here, Miss,' said a Tommy who had lost both legs from a shell, to a lady visitor. 'Here's my pal in the next bed been shot in the spine and can't feel his legs, and here am I without any legs and I'm always a-feeling them. Queer, ain't it?' Yes, the British soldier could see the humour of life, ay, and of death too; and it was this trait in him that was the despair of his phlegmatic opponent.

2. *Good laughter is absolutely essential to enable us to live our best.* Life is so serious, you may say, that the man who is in earnest will have no time for laughter. But it is just because life *is* so serious that we need all the laughter we can get to help us through with it. We may think too much of the seriousness of life. We may brood over the tragic side of human experience till we find ourselves in a madhouse. And what would be the good of that? A man's first business, say the Puritans, is to battle with his temptations, and with these temptations, therefore, his thoughts should be entirely engrossed. But surely he will best battle with his temptations by drawing his thoughts away from them. And here laughter and merriment, no less than healthy occupation, have their part to play. Cheerful amusements have saved many a soul from death.

¶ Let me remind you of what Bunyan has to say of the function of laughter. In the wonderful scene in the hostelry of Gaius, he gathers together the company of pilgrims round the supper-table. There old Honest sets the society in merry mood with his quips and riddles and joyful sayings. But there is one little group of people who sit far off in a dark corner, amazed and ashamed. They cannot understand such a novel conception of religion, these men of faint heart and little faith. But as the humour passes from lip to lip, the laughter becomes infectious, until even these gloomy ones are found smiling; and at last, as Bunyan phrases it, 'One laughed, and another laughed, and they all laughed together.' And then the most marvellous thing of all happened. These men and women were baptized not only into the spirit of laughter, but also into the spirit of courage, for on the morrow, when they set forth upon their journey, they were almost immediately summoned to a difficult and dangerous adventure, and for the first time these feeble ones, who had always before required the help of their brother pilgrims when in difficulty, became themselves fighters, and were enabled to take part in vanquishing their foes.[2]

(1) Laughter is of the utmost value to ourselves. We all know the bad effects of worry, anxiety, and despondency; how they upset the digestion, derange the liver, and incapacitate a man for work. Well, cheerfulness has just the opposite effect. It has more to do with our health than either food or drink. It 'doeth good like a

[1] *Theophrastus Such.*

[2] G. C. Martin, in *God's Garden,* 238.

medicine.' Of all silly delusions, perhaps the silliest is the notion that time given up to amusements is wasted time. It is no more wasted than meal-time, or bed-time. Most truly are amusements called recreations, for we are re-created by them.

(2) Laughter is of the utmost value to others. It is your duty to do all that in you lies to make your neighbours happy. But if you are of a gloomy and morose disposition, if you look askance at merriment and laughter, you will do all that in you lies to make them wretched. Stevenson describes with a caustic truth a not uncommon type of the pious person who objects to laughter. 'The sight of a pleasure in which we cannot or else will not share moves us to a particular impatience. It may be because we are envious, or because we are sad, or because we dislike noise and romping—being so refined, or because—being so philosophic—we have an overweighing sense of life's gravity: at least, as we go on in years, we are all tempted to frown upon our neighbour's pleasures. People are nowadays so fond of resisting temptations; here is one to be resisted. They are fond of self-denial; here is a propensity that cannot be too peremptorily denied. There is an idea abroad among moral people that they should make their neighbours good. One person I have to make good: myself. But my duty to my neighbour is much more nearly expressed by saying that I have to make him happy—if I may.' [1]

(3) Laughter may help on the coming of the Kingdom of God. It is one of the strongest reforming agencies in society. Lord Rosebery, with his usual felicity of phrase, tells us that our chief debt to Charles Dickens was that he taught us to laugh again. That is true, of course. But do we always remember all that Dickens did when he did that? It was not merely that he gave us excuse for the wholesome physiological exercise of laughter. For that alone, one may be grateful. But he did more. He taught us, by making us laugh. He reformed abuses and infused a kinder, more humane spirit into English society, by making us laugh. When Dickens wishes to enlist our sympathy for some ill-treated section of the community, little under-fed domestics, or shamefully abused schoolboys in Yorkshire, he does not pile on the agony. As Mr. Chesterton would say, he piles on the ludicrous. But what is the consequence? Why, when the laughter has subsided, there comes the swift reflection—But what a shame it is for children to be treated so! We come to that conclusion ourselves, it has not been thrust upon us by the writer, and therefore it is tenfold more firmly established, and will be held in remembrance much longer. Many other men besides Dickens felt strongly the abuses of the time and struck at them savagely. But Dickens laughed and joked as he plied his weapon. Yet the things that he touched with it died out of hand! Feeling without laughter may avail: but it is much more powerful when it has the saving salt of humour to keep it from degenerating into uselessness. Carlyle speaks of the interaction of the two. 'The essence of humour is sensibility; warm, tender fellow-feeling with all forms of existence. Nay, we may say that unless seasoned and purified by humour, sensibility is apt to run wild; will readily corrupt into disease, falsehood, or, in one word, sentimentality.[1] So another great thinker, George Meredith, is never done praising laughter, thoughtful laughter. It clears the heart as thunder clears the air. It is the wine and bread of sanity. In his opinion, one great cure for the age and its troubles would be reached if people could be persuaded first of all to laugh at themselves a little, and thus get rid of silly pride and obstinacy; then to laugh, with trembling in their mirth, at other people, instead of growing impatient and angry at the follies and affectations of the race.

In every city street, the merry heart proves itself medicinal. It heartens men, and puts new cheer in them, and makes them think of the sunshine in November; and in a murky and foggy world like this that is by no means a despicable service. It is a curious circumstance that when one person coughs others in sympathy start coughing also. But coughing, save in the pessimist's philosophy, has got no monopoly of contagion. Let any man, taking his courage in both hands, go radiant and singing through this world of shadows, and he will bring a song to a hundred lips that otherwise would have been silent as the grave.

[1] *A Christmas Sermon.*

[1] *Miscellaneous Essays*, i. 14.

Laugh and be merry: remember, in olden time,
God made Heaven and Earth for joy He took in a rhyme,
Made them, and filled them full with the strong red wine of His mirth,
The splendid joy of the stars: the joy of the earth.

So we must laugh and drink from the deep blue cup of the sky,
Join the jubilant song of the great stars sweeping by,
Laugh, and battle, and work, and drink of the wine outpoured
In the dear green earth, the sign of the joy of the Lord.

Laugh and be merry together, like brothers akin,
Guesting awhile in the rooms of a beautiful inn,
Glad till the dancing stops, and the lilt of the music ends.
Laugh till the game is played; and be you merry, my friends.[1]

II.

The Wrong Kind of Laughter.

THE faculty of laughter is one of God's supreme gifts: but it can be abused. We know how the faculty of grief is capable of perversion, when we see people shedding tears over trivial disappointments, and little concerned for the deeper losses of the moral and the spiritual life. But perhaps it is true upon the whole to say that laughter is more capable of abuse than tears. 'In laughter,' a modern novelist observes, 'there are more dreadful phases than in tears.' Many people, feeling this, have condemned all mirth. Here, as we have seen, they are wrong, for laughter is of many kinds: it ranges from the quiet sense of humour which is a mark of sanity, up through innocent amusement and clean wit to the laughter of cheerfulness and good spirits which rejoices at some happiness for ourselves or other people. Then we laugh, and we are meant to laugh, at pretensions and affectations. We try to laugh people out of some fear or folly. And we should have grace to laugh now and then at ourselves. But laughter is not invariably a blessing: we cannot say that *all* laughter is good, for, as with the rest of the finest human qualities, the range of its perversions is wide. The man who can laugh at anything is worse than the man who can laugh at nothing. Apart from the laughter of hysteria or insanity, we come across the laughter of frivolity—noisy and useless, like 'the crackling of thorns under a pot,' the giggle and the titter, the laughter that bubbles from silly and shallow natures, the gaiety which is gained at the expense of kindness, the jesting to which truth and dignity are sacrificed, the amusement of one at the humiliation of another, and the malign rejoicing over the defeat of justice and goodness. He is a poor man and a poor Christian who never laughs: but it is far better never to have laughed in one's life than to laugh like that.

1. *Evil laughter means that the baser elements are triumphing in the self.* One can gauge the culture-level of the laughter by considering the nature of the circumstances calling forth the merriment. The sight of a decrepit old woman struggling with a heavy burden may possess humour for the street-Arab but arouses nothing but pity in a refined being. All laughter has a touch of triumph in it—and we can best assess the laughter by considering what it shows as triumphing. When in Shakespeare's play the dying Mercutio makes a jest of his own mortal wound, our pity is mixed with admiration, for he has triumphed over the fear of death. When a man laughs at an indecent story—what is triumphing in his mind then?

Let us look at some of the less desirable qualities whose triumph leads to laughter.

(1) There is the laughter of *ridicule*. Sometimes ridicule is justified, when it is the rejoicing of truth over the foiled pretensions of those who hate and thwart righteousness. But ridicule easily slips into incredulity, as in the laughter of the friends of Jairus, who thought they knew better than Jesus did and laughed derisively to think of His discomfiture when He saw the dead body of the child He had come to heal. This is laughter poisoned by sneering.

(2) This passes easily into the laughter of *cruelty*, which can be overheard when children mock at deformed people or at foreigners, or when older people, who ought to know better, laugh

[1] John Masefield.

maliciously at mishaps to others. We may laugh at what is a serious matter to our neighbour, and laugh with a note of hard contempt in our voice, which is irreligious as well as rude. Humour ought always to be good humour, in both senses of the term 'good.' It is unlawful and ugly when the unfortunate are made a laughing-stock or when purity is derided.

¶ Philip of Spain, when the news of the French Massacre reached him, is said to have laughed for the first and only time in his life.[1]

¶ On a railway platform in Germany were standing some English prisoners, including a wounded officer. To the latter a German soldier offered a cup of coffee. The officer reached out his hand to take the proffered cup, whereupon the German spat into it amid the ribald laughter of the bystanders. Such humour could, of course, appeal only to singularly depraved and callous individuals, because it is *at* a person entitled to pity and *with* one who is a brutal cad.[2]

(3) The laughter of *folly* is common enough in the world. It is the child of a weak head and a cold heart. It is meaningless and blessingless. It is what the book called Ecclesiastes so graphically likens to 'the crackling of thorns under a pot'; *i.e.* to a fire of thorns burning quickly and loudly, but soon dying out and leaving only dead ashes behind. Do we not know the man or the boy whose laughter is such? He is shallow, frivolous, perhaps profane. He does not enter into the profound lessons of life. It is all a jest to him, as it was to one vain English poet. Nothing touches him, or nothing touches him deeply. He never reflects what may be the issue of his actions, still less of his words. The laughter of fools is a pitiful thing; it robs life of half its dignity and beauty; and the heathen poet was not far wrong when he said that 'silly laughter was the silliest thing in the world.'

¶ More pitiable than forced merriment is the thoughtless merriment which we all know. It is the merriment of those who have not been wakened yet to what the Roman poet calls 'the tears of things.' It is the merriment of those who live upon the surface, and have never realised that life is stern, and who will not believe that in every human lot there is a pierced hand not very far away. Such shallow folk are invariably heartless.[1]

¶ Anyone must be mainly ignorant, or thoughtless, who is surprised at everything he sees; or wonderfully conceited, who expects everything to conform to his standard of propriety. Clowns and idiots laugh on all occasions.[2]

(4) The laughter of folly is bad, but worse is the laughter of *irreverence*. Its source is the spirit which cannot, for example, see anything except the ludicrous side of poverty and drunkenness, and which, on other lines, will persist in discovering food for amusement in what others cherish as holy and noble. Even good taste should forbid the attempt to raise a laugh over sacred subjects.

This laughter of irreverence easily becomes the laughter that stifles nobility, generosity, self-sacrifice or self-respect. How many of us, if the truth were told, would not confess that at one time or other, for fear of being teased, or ridiculed, or sneered at, we have done what we wish now we had never done. But if so, how wicked is this use of laughter! How wicked it is to bruise young, tender, guileless souls by scoffing at their best and purest impulses!

There was a laughing devil in his sneer.

Oh! let it not be said of any one of us.

¶ It is said that a Comic Life of Jesus was circulated during last century on the boulevards at Paris. We may shudder at such profanity, but we ought to recollect that in less obvious ways it is possible to throw ridicule upon the Bible by inuendoes and silly jokes.[3]

¶ At breakfast the hostess, reading aloud a letter, came across an allusion to Mrs. Josephine Butler, who had done so much for the protection of women and young girls. At her name a little snigger went round the table. 'And now in society,' says A. C., 'I always hear that snigger in everything.'[4]

Your laughter has killed more hearts than ever
were pierced with swords,
Ever you daub new mirrors and turn the old to
the wall;

[1] J. A. Froude, *History of England*, 58.
[2] C. M. Beadnell.
[1] G. H. Morrison, *The Weaving of Glory*, 219.
[2] W. Hazlitt.
[3] J. Moffatt.
[4] E. M. Phillipps, *Lanoe Falconer*, 84.

And more than blood is lost in the weary battle
of words.[1]

2. *Evil laughter is to be guarded against like the plague.* In the first place it means, as we have seen, that something is badly wrong in the balance of our souls. People who laugh at the wrong things have been 'proved with mirth' and found wanting. Hardly anything in our nature is more characteristic than what we choose to laugh at, or the tone in which we laugh. Our laughter is a clue to our inward selves; if there is anything vulgar or coarse or vain or sour or callous or malicious lying in our hearts, it will be apt to come out in our laughter. We reveal ourselves unconsciously in many ways, but few things are a surer index to our real characters than this. And it may be an index to what is foul or foolish. When you hear some men or women laughing, you realize what a fallen creature is. Their very merriment has a note of debasement in it. The way in which they express their humour is a repulsive and ominous sign of moral degradation. And there is a vicious circle. Triumphant evil makes us laugh: but of all the forces that make evil to triumph, evil laughter is the most potent. It is impossible to Christianize a nation so long as it delights in dirty or cruel jokes.

This faculty of merriment, which can raise us to the sunlight of God, can also lower us to a laughter like that of the men who made merry over the corpses of the prophets. For good or evil, we possess this capacity for laughter, and according to the use we make of it we shall be judged by Him who came not only to fulfil but also to purify our joys.

Popularity.

Luke vi. 26.—'Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you.'

THIS is a hard saying: it contradicts our common estimate of good and evil: it seems to put religion and the gospel of Christ in a repulsive light; to demand of us an indifference to the judgment of others which few can rise to, and which does not always make those who do profess to rise to it more amiable or even better men. Let us ask ourselves seriously why our Lord should thus speak.

[1] A. Noyes.

1. First of all, it is more than probable that, if men speak well of you, their judgment of you is fallacious; you do not deserve it. 'In the like manner did their fathers unto the false prophets.' Men are fallible judges of one another's real character. When they blame most severely, it is very possible that there may be extenuating circumstances of which they are unaware, or perhaps counterbalancing virtues which, if taken into account, would altogether reverse the result. How often does a popular manner, a plausible tongue, a self-possessed demeanour, blind people to the real character—concealing a false heart, a selfish spirit, an ungodly life. When this is so, how little can the popular judgment be regarded as a real advantage: how well can we understand, if to be well spoken of is to be falsely spoken of, that our Lord should describe it as the very opposite of a blessing.

2. And yet, however fallacious, however false, the popular estimate, it has a direct tendency to carry us along with it. One would have imagined that no man could be misled, in his own judgment of himself, by anything that another, or that all the world, could say of him. Within, in the secret of the soul, there can scarcely be room for disguises or counterfeits: alone by himself, or kneeling before God, a man must surely see himself as he is, and can scarcely apprehend the risk of deception or mistake. And doubtless it would be so, if he lived much by himself or before God: but the man of whom everyone speaks well rarely does so. The outer world is for him too full of sunshine to permit of his being driven within for light: while all smiles upon him, he has no need to seek comfort elsewhere than in the society of other men. And so living he naturally adopts their judgments, as upon other subjects, so also upon this, his own character. It is a flattering judgment; perhaps he suspects its hollowness. But at all events it makes life very agreeable, and humours in the highest degree the indolence of human nature. Thus, to be generally well spoken of is not only very probably a false position as respects the facts of the case, but it has a direct tendency to mislead and to deceive the very person who is the subject of it.

¶ O great and wise, to be ill at ease when your deeds please the mob! The excesses of popular

applause never satisfy the sensible. Some there are such chameleons of popularity that they find enjoyment not in the sweet savours of Apollo but in the breath of the mob. . . . Take no pleasure in the wonder of the mob, for ignorance never gets beyond wonder. While vulgar folly wonders wisdom watches for the trick.[1]

3. And then follow, in the third place, certain practical consequences, all of them, from a Christian point of view, serious and even disastrous.

(1) The first of these is, *the loss of humility*. We have commonly a very imperfect idea of what humility is. Practically we regard it rather as a veiling and disguising of our own high opinion of ourselves than as the non-possession of that high opinion. To be really humble is, not in profession only, but in point of feeling also, to think poorly of ourselves; to know ourselves thoroughly, and (as a necessary consequence of that) to have a keen sense of our own infirmities, our own faults, our own sinfulness, in short, of our own demerit. Then and then only are our doctrines and our feelings at one. We call ourselves miserable sinners; till we think ourselves so, there is a discrepancy between us and our words; till we think ourselves so, we can never understand what God has borne in bearing with us, what Christ has undertaken in undertaking our salvation. But how can he of whom all men speak well, and who has begun to believe their testimony, ever again know what true humility is, unless he is brought to that knowledge by some terrible lesson, by some dreadful fall? He may, and he probably will, wear a mask over his pride; for that is a condition of being well spoken of. But the pride itself will be only hidden not removed; and where pride is enthroned there cannot be the mind meet for God's Kingdom.

(2) With the decay of humility comes *the loss of watchfulness*. If we are not conscious, and painfully conscious, of infirmity and of sinfulness, how can we watch? why should we watch? Watchfulness, in the Christian sense, is the posture of one who feels himself to be in danger and beset with enemies, real though invisible, within and without; who knows that he is powerless in himself to meet these foes successfully; and who therefore waits upon God continually to overcome them for him. How can these things be, in him who is self-satisfied or half self-satisfied?

(3) And with the loss of humility and the loss of watchfulness comes as a natural consequence *the loss of strength*. Praise is essentially an enfeebling and enervating thing. It relaxes the sinews of the mind as sultry weather relaxes those of the body. It is not the atmosphere for exertion, for bold sustained action, or for vigorous earnest resolution. Praise promotes repose; self-satisfaction first, and, as its natural result, the intermission of effort. Can we say more against it than that? If that is the effect of being well spoken of, well may our Lord say to us, Woe to you when you are the subjects of it.

4. Again, an effect of being well spoken of is to make a man covet approbation and at last live for it. How rarely is it seen (though both Christian and worldly men have in their different ways presented noble examples of the contrary) that a man obtains popularity without valuing it, without becoming anxious for its continuance and its increase. It is a pleasant thing to be popular. Human nature loves popularity, and finds it very hard either to sit loose to it when gained, or to do anything which may endanger it. What a snare this is! What a temptation to refrain from the strong word of rebuke, from the daring act of independence, by which the favour of men may be forfeited, and the approval of God alone sought! How few men have the courage for this; even though in the long run, could they but look far enough, such courage might itself find a reward in men's applause! How much oftener is it seen that one who did run well, who entered upon life with a noble disregard of the world's opinion, resolved to think and to act only for duty and for God, has been hindered in his course by the unexpected access of human praise, has found it sweet and luxurious, has begun at last to covet it, has relaxed little by little the rigour of his principles and the tension of his exertions, and has died a worldly man, having had his home and his portion here!

¶ Most vividly I can recall my first introduction to him [Dr. Dale]. It was at West Bromwich. Dale had been reopening one of our churches there, and the congregation was immense. I had

[1] Balthasar Gracian, *The Art of Worldly Wisdom*, 16.

been taken over by my brother-in-law, Mr. Hall, and was armed with a letter from my father. As the congregation was dispersing we made our way to the vestry. The deacons were at their best. The visit of the renowned minister had led them to magnify their office. In their exalted state of mind, a boy in his teens intruding himself on the notice of the great Dale was unseemly and preposterous. I myself was nervous and excited and sensitive. But withal, my eagerness to speak to the Doctor and to be able to say that I had really shaken hands with him triumphed over all my fears. The frowning array of officials —probably far kinder than to my childish eyes they seemed—could not discourage me, nor their curt questions drive me from my purpose. I had my way. The vestry door opened, and I went in. Dr. Dale was sitting with one leg across the corner of the table: I can see him now. To some he may have seemed unattractive, and he would certainly shut up or stave off the presumptuous or the rude. To me he seemed then and ever after a large-hearted and fatherly man. He read my letter, and at once was full of tender interest. My father had, I suppose, hinted at my inclination towards the ministry. 'My lad,' said Dale, looking kindly down at me, 'remember *our* temptation is not as a rule money.' Then he pointed through the open door to the church, where the crowds of people were still slowly struggling down the aisles; '*that* is our temptation,' he said. Boy as I was, I felt instinctively what he meant: and a curious surprise came over me that *he* should feel the snares of popularity so keenly. Often since then have I recalled the strong kind face, the great burly man sitting across the table, the crowded vestry—for there were numbers of friends waiting to speak—and the resonant tones, so serious, even though accompanied by a smile, '*that* is our temptation.' [1]

The Unpopularity of Christianity.

Luke vi. 26 —'Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you.'

THAT is an astonishing statement. It would be incredible, except that it comes from the lips of Christ. We should have said, Blessed are ye when all men speak well of you. Christ said, 'Woe.' These verses are a parallel version to Matthew's account of the Beatitudes. Our text is only another form of the saying—'Blessed are ye, when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.' Whenever the Church fails to rouse the antagonism and anger of the world she has failed in loyalty to the evangel of Jesus. Loyalty to Christ's commission must result in unpopularity, and rouse the antagonism of men.

1. For, first, it is our business to bring a new standard of life into the world. It is the business of Christians to be unworldly. The distinction can never be abolished between the true Church and the world, though the distinction may often be misunderstood or misrepresented. Look at the early Christians. What a significant fact it is that in the Christian catacombs no tombstone bears the name of a slave, for there were no slaves in the Christian Church. There all men had become brothers; master and slave, rich and poor, were all on a level in the service of Christ. What a revolutionary view—a revolutionary view which the world instinctively recognized as revolutionary and so put to death its preachers. And it is our business to-day to bring into the affairs of the world a new standard. This is a money-loving age; men measure almost all things by money, and we have to bring them a new standard. Property has its rights, most certainly it has its rights; but the New Testament lays down that there is an order of rights. There are some rights that come first. 'If any man hateth not his own father and mother for my sake, he cannot be my disciple.' Christ did not mean that father and mother had no rights; He meant that His rights came first. Property has its rights, wealth has its rights, aristocracy has its rights; but the rights of the whole people came before the rights of the aristocracy or of any section of the community. Wealth has its rights, but the rights of morality come before the rights of wealth and of property. If you can abolish your slums and at the same time retain your aristocracy, by all means retain them; but if you cannot abolish your slums without abolishing your millionaires, your slums must go at all costs. If

[1] *The Life of Charles Silvester Horne*, 92.

you can close the public-houses without damaging the investments of the shareholders, by all means defend those financial interests. But if you cannot close the public-houses without damaging the investors, the public-houses must go, though every investor in the land became a beggar to-morrow. There is surely no more shameful thing in the history of recent times than our reluctance to close the opium dens in Shanghai, or that a British minister should stand in the House of Commons and declare that we must at least come up to the standard of China. Christian England to be content with following in the footsteps of a pagan power! Surely it shows how the new standard needs applying to life. Apply that new standard, declare it frankly and freely, and the Church will not long have to complain of the want of persecution.

2. It is the duty of the Christian pulpit to denounce the social evils of the time. Yet you often hear it said that it is our business to preach the gospel and not to denounce these evils. It is a subtle evasion. It is based upon the idea that it is our business not to irritate men. Christ, it is true, gave to us the parable of the Prodigal Son, and spoke that memorable word which must always be uttered and reiterated from the pulpit: 'The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.' But Christ also went into the Temple and 'found in the temple those that also sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money, sitting. And he made a scourge of cords, and cast all out of the temple.' That temple-market was owned by the high priest and his family, and in casting out the offence, Christ touched the pockets of these wealthy priests. And it is significant that at the last the cry for His death came not from the Pharisees, but from the Sadducees, the priestly class, the high priest and his family, whose financial interests Christ had damaged. As a literal fact, Christ laid down His life in denouncing one of the social evils of His day. And it is our business in preaching the gospel to preach the whole gospel, to preach the Christ of the Cross, and to preach also the Reformer of the Temple. Every great leader of a religious revival in the history of the world has been not only an evangelist, but a social reformer. Paul himself, with his collection for the poor, was striving by social work to link together in bonds of mutual sympathy the Church of the Gentiles with the Church of the Jew. Francis of Assisi, Chalmers the great evangelist of Scotland, Wesley himself, were great social reformers. The last letter Wesley ever penned was on one of the burning political questions of the hour, when he wrote to encourage Wilberforce in his great, hotly contested, bitterly denounced propaganda, for the freeing of all slaves beneath the British flag. And Moody, the great evangelist of the nineteenth century, in his sermons demanded social reform.

¶ The ministers who would change the habits of the rich will have to preach the prophet's message about the duty of giving and the sin of luxury, and to denounce ways of business now pronounced to be respectable and Christian. Old teaching will have to be put in new language, giving shown to consist in sharing, and earning to be a form of sacrifice. For some time it may be the glory of a preacher to empty rather than to fill his church as he reasons about the Judgment to come, when 'twopence a gross to the match-makers will be laid alongside of the 22 per cent. to the shareholders,' and penny dinners for the poor compared with the sixteen courses of the rich.[1]

3. In preaching the Cross itself we are bound to rouse the antagonism of the world. There is what Paul calls 'the offence of the cross.' Wherein does the offence lie? Does it lie in the æsthetic dislike of the idea that we are redeemed by a crucified Man, just as it would be repulsive for Englishmen to-day to think of their Saviour as one who had been hanged? Does it lie in the mere offence of the imagination that dislikes the vivid realism of such a hymn as—

There is a fountain filled with blood.

Is it the mere intellectual offence of the difficulty of understanding the Atonement? No. The offence of the Cross is felt neither by intellect nor by feeling, but by the evil heart of unbelief. And wherever the Cross is faithfully and freely preached it is bound to rouse the antagonism of the unbelieving heart. We are

[1] *Canon Barnett*, ii. 262.

saved by grace, and man's pride rebels against the humiliation of abandoning his own rights and his own righteousness. We are saved by free grace. 'The free gift of God is eternal life,' and His free gift establishes unlimited rights over us. As someone has said, 'Englishmen have a dislike for any religion that is of an unlimited liability.' If He saves us freely by His grace, nothing He asks of us will be too much, nothing may we refuse. And we must always put together His cross and our cross, for the one involves the other. When Jesus 'began to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things' of the high priest and of the elders of the people, He went on to say, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me.'

See! from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

That is very beautiful; but the hymn goes on—

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

It is that verse which is so difficult for us to sing sincerely and with deliberate intention. How many men there are to-day who resent the claims upon their time, upon their service, upon their strength, upon their money, which the Church and religion make. They complain that too much is being demanded of them. Too much! Can we do too much for Him who did so much for us? It is the business of the pulpit to declare the whole truth and all the meaning of religion, and all its claims. And it is impossible to do it, even in our enlightened age, without finding that many men will say all manner of evil against us falsely for His sake.

¶ Christ's whole life was a cross and a martyrdom, and dost thou seek rest and joy for thyself? Thou art deceived, thou art deceived if thou expectest anything but tribulation; for this mortal life is full of miseries, and on every part it is inscribed with the cross. The higher a soul hath advanced in the Spirit, so much the heavier crosses he finds; because the grief of his banishment increases with his love to God. It is not in man to love and bear the Cross, . . . to shun earthly honours, to bear affronts with meekness, and to despise himself and wish to be despised by others; . . . to have no desire after the riches, the honours, and the pleasures of the world. If thou look to thyself, thou shalt be able to accomplish nothing of this kind. But if thou turnest to the Divine power within thee, . . . the strength of Omnipotence will be imparted unto thee, and the world and the flesh shall be put under thy feet. . . . When thou shalt come to this state, that tribulation shall seem sweet to thee, then . . . thou wilt have found the gate of paradise.[1]

Loving the Enemy.

Luke vi. 27, 28.—'Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.'

What better friendship than to cover shame?
What greater love than for a friend to die?
Yet this is better, to asself the blame;[2]
And this is greater, for an enemy.[3]

'LOVE your enemies'! That is a stupendous moral height, bewildering in its precipitous flanks and sharp and radiant summit. It is the Himalaya of the moral ideal, reaching into the very heavens with its dazzling snow-white crown. And yet it is no mere spectacle of contemplation, but a field of possible achievement; it is not something to admire, but something to conquer. It is not a beautiful poem, but a possible life; not a cloud-built castle in the air, but the native home of the soul. It is not some distant snow-capped Lebanon to which the weary husbandman in the sultry vale turns his covetous but hopeless eyes, but a cool and holy possibility in the common life.

'Love your enemies'! Notice that the words are not spoken by the Master in a conditional mood; they are proclaimed as a strong imperative. They are spoken not in the tone of pleading, but in the accent of authority. Mere pleading about great moral ideals might have unnerved me; authority braces and confirms me. The optative might leave me in trembling uncer-

[1] Thomas à Kempis.
[2] 'Asself the blame,' blame oneself. [3] Giles Fletcher.

tainty; the imperative is significant of strength and resource. Yes, behind the authority there is resource. Every commandment of the Lord is a power-house, containing the needful strength, a larder containing the requisite bread, an armoury containing the essential implements. Every commandment implies a background of equipment. Every commandment is an inverse promise; on its other side is grace.

1. What is the task that is laid upon me? Amid certain adverse and ungracious conditions I am to maintain a clean and gracious demeanour. Amid certain foul and bitter antagonisms I am to get a healthy and invincible sweetness. What are the antagonisms named by the Lord? Let us mass them together with all their threatening front. 'Love your enemies'! What enemies are these?

(1) First of all, our national enemies. Israel had fostered an aversion to nations beyond her own pale. It had been written in their law: 'Thou shalt not . . . bear any grudge against the children of thy people,' and by a perverse and unhallowed interpretation they had considered that this injunction gave them liberty to bear a grudge against all other peoples. When our Lord referred to the Syrophenician woman as one of 'the dogs' He was not using a word of His own coining, or taking a conception from His own mind; He was quoting from the speech of His disciples, and quoting it with feelings of burning shame. He quoted it that He might condemn it; He used it in order that by the very use He might reveal its folly. Israel had come to regard all folk across the border as the children of an alien race, and to look upon them as their foes. This traditional enemy they were now called upon to love.

(2) 'Them that persecute you'! Here is the second of our antagonisms. Them that persecute you for any reason, but especially for your religion. Here is a little record of one of these antagonists: 'As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house . . . breathing out threatenings and slaughter.' And the Lord's ideal is that this man should be loved by those whom he was harrying into imprisonment and death. It is not altogether an old-world incident, whose features are now altogether worn away.

(3) 'Them that hate you'! Here is the third rank. Them that hate you, you know not why, but especially, perhaps, who hate you for the hue and tenor of your religious life.' 'Who curse you,' who execrate you, who consign you to the darkest doom, who will have no heaven with gate wide enough for you, who tell you, tearlessly, that perdition is prepared for heretics such as you, and that your inevitable destiny is in the night! And then, as if this army of antagonisms were not vast enough, the Master adds another regiment. 'Them that despitefully use you,' who insult you, who slander you, who pervert your motives, who misinterpret your simplest acts, who see a subtle jesuitry in a common courtesy, and Satanic treachery in a noble compromise!

Such are the antagonisms. Are they black enough, bitter enough, awful enough? Are the conditions sufficiently exacting? Cast your eyes again over the dark and serried ranks: 'Your enemies'! 'Them that persecute you'! 'Them that hate you'! 'Them that curse you'! 'Them that despitefully use you'! Such are the hostile, black-bannered regiment whom our Saviour places before us. Now what shall we do with them? What is our duty toward them in the burning light of the holy God?

2. 'Love your enemies'! This does not refer to the feeling of natural love, such as exists between husband and wife, child and parent, friend and friend. There are two words in the New Testament which are translated by the word 'love.' The one is descriptive of natural love, and the other is descriptive of a higher love, a love with a spiritual element in it, a love which is always inclusive of faith. It is not so much a feeling as an attitude; not so much a passion as a double relationship between God and man. Perhaps we cannot define its essence, but its activities can be described; and our Master unfolds these activities in the subsequent words. Here, then, are the exercises of this high-born spiritual love, when it is confronted by massed and bitter foes.

(1) 'Pray for them'! We are to take our enemies, the persecutors, into our prayers. We are to give them hospitality in our devotions. But should not I be a hypocrite to mention my enemy and to ask for him the blessing of the Almighty? Oh, no! Nobody is a hypocrite who compels himself to name his enemies in the presence

of his Lord! We may do it unwillingly, but never mind the unwillingness, let us thrust them in! Let us name them and pray that the gracious rain of heaven may rest upon their souls. Do not let us crowd our prayers with our own sufferings and complaints, but just let us take our enemies, by the ministry of intercession, into the green pastures and by the still waters of grace, and let us humbly pray that in that glorious fullness their hunger and thirst may be satisfied.

(2) 'Do good to them which hate you'! We are to take our enemies, our haters, and render them service! Literally we are to 'do the beautiful unto them,' in response to the ugly which they have done to us. When your enemy is overwhelmed, do the beautiful unto him, in kindly letter or in kindly word or in kindly deed.

(3) 'Bless them that curse you'! We are to ask heaven for those who would consign us to hell! We are to take the enemies who despitefully use us, and we are to eulogize and to speak well of them, and this can never be done unless our eyes are anointed with the Divine eye-salve, that even behind all the ugliness of those who oppose us we may see something beautiful and good. 'I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in . . . discernment.' Such are to be our responses to our antagonisms, a love-attitude pervaded by spirituality, and which by sincere prayer and by kindly and beautiful service, and by the ministry of a wise and truthful eulogy seeks the welfare and redemption of our foes.

¶ In the Life of Bishop Moule of Durham one of his clergy writes: 'I am afraid I must own that I could not endure his appointment, and he had not been here three months before the Bishop and I were involved in a dispute, which was settled by his giving way in the most generous way. Not long after we had a much graver controversy, which went on for months, and was not without extremely unpleasant moments. There came, for instance, an interview in his study at Auckland at the close of which I said I could not accept his hospitality to lunch after our very acrimonious discussion. In the most charming way he prevailed upon me to stay, and treated me with overflowing courtesy, and saw me into his brougham to drive to the station.

A year or two later a fresh and still more unpleasant dispute arose, and ended, as I thought, in a final breach between us. Six months later there came another letter, marked, as usual, Private and Confidential. I opened it, wondering what fresh trouble was brewing, and read:

"My Dear ———,

May I rather abruptly put before you an important question? Will you accept the living of ———? It is a most important point of vantage. And it is one where I should rejoice to see *you*. Do not hurry your decision, of course. Your Lord will guide you.

Ever sincerely yours,

H. Dunelm."

'"Well!" I said to my wife, "he's a man after all, a man that can bear no grudge." "Yes," she answered, "a big man, and a Christian, and a gentleman." I used to say that the Bishop was beaten in every one of our disputes; but he won absolutely at the finish. After all that had happened I felt I had no choice but to go, and for years till his death he had no more devoted slave in the Diocese than the man who had so often bitterly opposed him.'[1]

3. And why should we love? There is a threefold answer.

(1) First, *for our own sake.* Such an attitude will be the best ministry for preserving our own moral and spiritual health. These exercises will secure us from a similar degeneracy, and they will keep us in the rare and delicious air in which all enduring joy is born. Let it ever be remembered that 'the moral ideal and man's highest happiness always coincide.'

(2) And second, we must love *for our antagonist's sake.* To be retaliative is never to be redemptive. Retaliation, in a world governed by a holy God, can never be triumphant. And surely that is as applicable to peoples as to individuals. I speak now from the very depths of the evangel of Christ. If there be a God, and His decrees run through the universe, retaliation must have Him for an antagonist, and must therefore most certainly fail. If I have an enemy, love is the greatest thing in the world! If we want a man to divest himself of a garment, the old legend tells us that sunshine is a much more effective instrument than storm and wind. John the

[1] *The Life of Handley Carr Glyn Moule*, 195.

Baptist sought to work by means of axe and flame; Jesus ministered through the sunny medium of an all-constraining love.

(3) And thirdly, we must love *for our Father's sake.* 'That ye may be sons of your Father in heaven,' and that the likeness and kinship between us may be perfectly clear. We must love in order that God may be seen in us, and magnified in our daily life. When we love all men we shall be as God. And for such conduct we were illumined by Him. 'For what kind of a candle is that which, when set upon the table, selects the articles upon which it will throw its friendly beams?' 'A man lighteth a candle and setteth it on a candlestick that it may give light to all that are in the house.' 'He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good.'

¶ 'What great matter,' said a heathen tyrant to a Christian, while he was beating him almost to death—'What great matter did Christ ever do you?' 'Even this,' answered the Christian, 'that I can forgive you, though you use me so cruelly'.

Christian Giving.

Luke vi. 30.—'Give to every one that asketh thee.'

'A COUNSEL of perfection.' 'Not to be taken literally.' 'A pious sentiment.' 'A lofty ideal.' 'A beautiful maxim.' 'A rhetorical exaggeration.' 'A figure of speech.' 'Give to every one that asketh? Impossible.' 'Of him that taketh away my goods ask them not again? Absurd.' These are the thoughts which may perhaps pass through our minds, whether we confess it or not, when we hear the words of the text read.

Yet the words must have a meaning, a sober, serious, practical meaning, and that meaning it is our duty to discover. 'Give to every one that asketh thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.'

1. And, first, we must make some allowance for the conditions of life in Palestine at that very time. Keeping to this one Gospel—the Gospel of Luke—we shall find little touches here and there—quite enough to show what the social state of the country must then have been. You might almost think it was our own country. There are the same extremes of poverty and wealth. Here is a prosperous landowner pulling down his barns because they are too small to hold his corn. Here is a trader making a cent. per cent. profit. Ten pounds yield ten pounds more. Here is a steward cheating his master and bribing his friends. His master is too rich to know that his goods are being wasted, his friends are too poor to refuse his tempting offers. Here is a millionaire, as we should call him now, clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day. Here is a bankrupt speculator unable to finish the tower he had begun. Here too is Lazarus lying at the rich man's door. Here is a debtor to whom fifty pence is a sum that he cannot pay. Here is another debtor doomed with his family to be sold into slavery. Here are lepers shut outside the towns, and blind men begging by the wayside. Here is a friendless widow entreating an unfeeling judge to avenge her of her adversary; and here is another widow casting into the treasury two mites —all the living that she has. Here is a traveller stripped and wounded, and left half dead. Here is a spendthrift son, less well fed than the swine he feeds. And here are crowds of country people, poor labourers, sorely tempted to be anxious for the morrow, what to eat and what to put on, not quite sure even of to-morrow's bread.

These are scenes out of which parables were drawn. You may find them all in Luke. They are full of strong contrasts. When kind-hearted people with a strong sense of justice see strong contrasts they express themselves strongly. We need not wonder that strong things are now being said and written about labour, and the life of the labouring poor, about luxury and the living of the luxurious rich. And we can better understand how Jesus meant to say a strong thing, and to say it strongly, when He said, 'Give to every one that asketh thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.' There are cold-hearted people who will not be moved, will not even listen, unless you put things in a very strong way indeed. It was for them He said it.

2. But what exactly did He mean? We may be sure He did not mean that we should give to every beggar, and allow ourselves to be robbed right and left. We may be sure He did not intend any man to do what was good for himself, and bad for everyone else. It would be very bad

for society to allow beggars and thieves to thrive and multiply. Private virtues must be social virtues also, virtues for the good of the community, or they are not virtues at all. All this is clear enough now. It is part of the A B C of social economy. What, then, about our text? Is it possible, would it be advisable, to do what we are here told to do—'Give to every one that asketh thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again?'

It depends very much on what we mean by giving. Money is not the only thing to give. Very often it is the one thing not to give. Moreover, begging is not the only form of asking. Very often the most pleading wants are those which are unspoken. Every man or woman you meet is in need of something. Every sign of misery is an appeal, every look of helplessness is a petition. Sometimes those who most want help are those who are most unwilling to be helped. Every life wasted by sickness, worn by toil, worried by care, vexed by disappointment, oppressed by loneliness, defiled by sin, haunted by despair, if it does not call aloud, entreats your pity. Every slouching tramp, every skulking rogue, every drunkard, every fallen profligate, every ill-used child, and every ill-used beast, is a secret reproach, and an urgent, though silent, demand. These things ought not to be, and, if I do not mend them, I allow them. Social wrong means somewhere social neglect. Money? to cure ills like these? The good Samaritan keeps his money to the end. 'Whatsoever *thou* spendest more, I will repay thee.' But first he spends himself, the oil and wine of personal care and effort and stooping self-denial and self-inflicted loss. It is the taking out of the twopence to get others to do what we do not like doing ourselves—the getting rid at any price of the trouble and responsibility and unpleasantness of personal duty—that makes the wretchedness and waste of life around us. A Christian conscience ought to have no difficulty in explaining to itself the simple words: 'Give to every one that asketh thee'—however mute, however remote, the asking may be.

'What can I spare?' we say:
'Ah, this and this,
From mine array
I am not like to miss:
And here are crumbs to feed some hungry one;
They do but grow a cumbrance on my shelf: '—
And yet, one reads, our Father gave His Son,
Our Master gave Himself.[1]

The Ideal.

Luke vi. 32.—'What thank have ye?'

THE Master expects His disciples to be not only good, but supremely good; not merely as good as others, but better than the best of others. He expects to see in me higher aspirations, tenderer feelings, kindlier affections, purer love, more generous hands, than He finds in other men.

1. I am not to take on any airs of superiority; and yet I am to be superior to the general morality of the world. I am not to shut myself up in Pharisaic coldness, 'saluting my brethren only.' I am not to be niggard in my sympathies, helping those only who may in turn help me. I am to carry out in everything the spirit of my Lord, who said, 'When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. But, when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind; and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.'

2. Moreover, I am to keep down all pride and all resentment. I am to think kindly of those that most harshly judge me, and are bitter in their feelings towards me. I am to speak generously of the men that speak disparagingly of me. I am to love genuinely those that are most opposite to me in character; who are successfully outdistancing me in business or in fame; those even whose material and family interests most clash with mine, and who are vindicating at law what they suppose to be their rights against me: who have spoken cruel words about me, have slandered me, and injured me in every possible way. I am not to say 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' I am to love my enemy, to drop a branch, at least, of the sweet-smelling tree of kindness into the waters of his bitterness, if so be I can heal them, and turn his Marah into such an Elim as my own.

[1] Frederick Langbridge, *Little Tapers*, 34.

3. Still further, I am to be absolutely superior to that party-spirit which, under the guise of a greater sanctity, does mischief everywhere. I am to be above it, so far as my own nation is concerned. I may be a patriot, but I am not therefore to look down on other nations with contempt. I am to be above it, so far as my race is concerned. The duskiest skin may enshrine a noble soul. The blackest African may have a very white heart. 'God hath made all men of one blood,' and I must not 'call any man common or unclean.' I am to be above it, so far as my own religion even is concerned. I may thank God that the true light has come to me, but I am not to laugh at the superstitions from which His mercy alone has set me free, or to despise the dim gropings after light which can be seen in heathen lands. I am to be above it, so far as my own ecclesiastical denomination is concerned. I am to love all that are Christ's, be the Church in which they find their spiritual home as different from mine as it may. All pride, all jealousy, all fiery denunciation, all chilling contempt, all grudging of neighbourly help, all looking for some reward in kind before I stretch out a generous hand—all this I am to know absolutely nothing of.

4. In my private and personal life there is to be a crushing down of all that pettiness of temper that would make me both ungenerous and unjust. In my domestic life there is to be a tenderness, forbearance, harmony beyond what are found in ordinary homes. Family frictions are to be oiled by family love. In my business life there is to be a keener sense of absolute integrity than is felt by others beside me. In my social and public life there is to be a magnanimity that will never irritate by quick reproaches or misrepresent an opponent's words; a generous appreciation of all that is best in those from whom I differ most. This my Master expects of me. I am to do 'more than others.'

This is His ideal; and a life like this it must be my aim to reach. But can I reach it? It seems too high an attainment ever to be realized. In any ordinary mood of mind I am apt to regard such teaching as this as being unduly strained and exaggerated; a very beautiful ideal, but not to be taken as a working law for the life of every day. It seems too romantic; not sufficiently homely: a rule that cannot be obeyed till the golden age of the millennium has come. I say to myself, 'This is more than can be expected of flesh and blood'; and that is true. But then my Master is not speaking to me as to 'flesh and blood'; He is speaking to me as to one who has been both redeemed and renewed. Do I say to myself, 'This looks too much like the bondage of law, and I imagined I was free from law'? It is true that I am not under the law but under grace; yet, just because I am under grace, I should feel that to be a constraint to all practical holiness far stronger than mere law could put upon me; and I have, in addition, the promise of grace sufficient to help me in obeying my Master's commands. He never gives any command without a corresponding promise of help.

¶ The infinitely high ideal of perfect knowledge and perfect goodness, implied in the Christian command, 'Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect,' is an ideal, just because the unity of what is and what ought to be is deeper than their difference. The recognition of the limit of our knowledge, or the imperfection of our moral character, is a direct witness to the fact that there is more to be known and a better to be achieved. The negative implies the affirmative, and is its effect. . . . But, if the ideal of man as a spiritual being is conceived as perfect, then it follows not only that its attainment is possible, but that it is necessary. The guarantee of its own fulfilment which an ideal carries with it is an ideal, that is, as a potency in process of fulfilment becomes complete when that ideal is absolute. 'If God be for us, who can be against us?' The absolute good, in the language of Emerson, is 'too good not to be true.' If such an ideal be latent in the nature of man, it brings the order of the universe over to his side. For it implies a kinship between him, as a spiritual being, and the whole of existence. The stars in their courses fight for him. In other words, the moral ideal means nothing, if it does not imply a law which is universal. It is a law which exists already, whether man recognizes it or not; it is the might in things, a law of which 'no jot or tittle can in any wise pass away.' The individual does not institute the moral law; he finds it to be written both within and without him. His part is to recognize, not to create it; to make it valid

in his own life, and so to identify himself with it that his service of it may be perfect freedom.[1]

Nil Desperandum.

Luke vi. 35.—'Love your enemies, and do them good, and lend, never despairing' (RV).

The Authorized Version is, 'hoping for nothing again.' That translation represents the spirit of a great deal of work done in the name of Christ to-day. Christian work is often undertaken in a melancholy, desponding spirit. Men seem to say to themselves, 'We must make this effort, it is our duty, but nothing will come of it.' The views of many Christians are tinged with fatalism. Such a spirit will make our service for the Master a weary, joyless drudgery. Love is apt to flag when hope flies away.

The Revised Version gives a more correct rendering, and puts our duty in a brighter light. 'But love your enemies, and do them good, and lend, never despairing; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the Most High: for he is kind toward the unthankful and evil.' 'Never despairing,' or, as the R.V. margin puts it, yet more strongly, 'despairing of no man.' So far from not hoping, we are to continue in hope, to abound in hope, and to hope to the end.

¶ 'Despairing of no man' is the motto of Jesus Christ. I can recall no words which are more revelatory of the very heart of Christ, or more truly expressive of the spirit of His teaching. Dr. Parker says somewhere, that 'to secure that change in the reading of one verse was worth all the labour connected with the Revised Version of the New Testament. It gives a new banner to the Christian army. It sends a thrill of delight through all the hosts of Christian workers.'[2]

Do we realize that we are children of the 'God of all hope,' and disciples of Him who goes after the lost 'until He find it'? To judge from the way in which some Christians regard the work of the Church of Christ, one might conclude that hopefulness of spirit is a snare of the devil, against which they resolutely and successfully set themselves. It is no evidence of the power of the grace of God, when a man is overcome by the dreary pessimism of the times, and when he rings a knell of despair over every piece of service that he does for Jesus Christ. Patient, unwearying continuance in well-doing is far more expressive of the spirit of Jesus Christ. Our hope is to be never failing. Our love is to 'suffer long,' and still be 'kind.' The text says, in effect, 'Love, and go on loving; hope, and go on hoping; give, lend, try to help, returns or no returns, reward or no reward, sympathy or no sympathy, no matter how bad the soil, no matter how ungracious the recipients of your service, no matter how unpromising the prospects of your toil. Give a portion to seven, but do not stop short at the sacred number; have something for the eighth when he applies. Do not put off the projected effort until the success of it seems to be certain.

¶ A year or two ago the Sister of our Vicar came up to spend some time with him in December. She wanted to have a Christmas at St. Alban's, and especially to see 'dear Father Stanton's lads.' I'm always a little suspicious whenever any one asks to see my lads. However, she arranged to come to see them on Boxing Day, of all days. Now on Boxing Day in Holborn all the public houses are open and give free drinks to all comers, and by the afternoon of Boxing Day they'd all been round there. And Miss Suckling came, bringing with her the most beautiful boxes of sweets for 'Father Stanton's lads.' I draw a veil over what followed: they threw the sweets about, and I don't know what they did! I never dared to say a word about it again to Miss Suckling, and she never said a word on the subject to me till she was going home again at Candlemas. Then she came to say good-bye, and as she did so she said, 'Well, I think the thing that has encouraged me most has been the sight of your boys.' I looked at her, and she said, 'Yes, I've been working with the boys in a Suffolk village now for 30 years, and when I came to London in December I'd decided that it was quite hopeless, and that I'd give it up. But when I'd seen your boys, all I can say is mine are like angels by the side of them, so I'm going on.'[1]

¶ Do you remember Jean Valjean in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, released convict, victim to

[1] Sir Henry Jones, *Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher*, 132.

[2] S. L. Wilson, *Helpful Words for Daily Life*, 349.

[1] G. W. E. Russell, *Arthur Stanton*, 255.

sudden temptation, stealer of silver candlesticks, restored to his better self by the protecting love of the old Bishop, who declared that the candlesticks had been his gift? It is the world which sees the heap of refuse, and the one man who discerns the hidden radium worth a king's ransom; the world which scorns the filth after the gas has been extracted from the coal, and the one man who sees the beautiful aniline dyes.[1]

1. Why did our Lord speak of lending in connection with 'never despair'? It is not hard to understand. There is nothing about which men are so sensitive as money for others, especially lending money. Note how the kindliest man will change from gaiety into gravity when, after an exchange of the usual conventional compliments, you modestly introduce the subject of money. Why, you would seriously think that the generous, kind, social friend with whom you were speaking just a moment ago had all at once been changed, that his soul had been spirited away by some magical power. What is it? It is the reference to money, the hint that you are in difficulties, that you want a little loan. Whenever you want to know how poor a man is or thinks himself to be, just ask him for a loan.

People remember Solomon's words in Proverbs, 'He that is surety for the stranger shall smart for it,' and Shakespeare's 'Neither a borrower nor a lender be, for loan oft loseth both itself and friend, and borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.' But there is a little passage in Ps. xxxvii. 26 which they never can remember: He that is blessed of the Lord 'is ever merciful and lendeth.' And, when all is said and done, there have been loans made that were well repaid —repaid with interest. Many a man has been indebted to a loan from a friend for a first start in life, without which he never would have been what he is. Of course in the day of prosperity he may have forgotten that, but it abides still as a truth that the loan from a friend gave him his first chance of making money and establishing himself in life.

2. But, after all, there are nobler loans given on earth than monetary ones. What loans, for example, you give your children: time, prayer, and instruction. The world will never, and can never, resolve against lending. You and I have been brought up on loans. Tears have been lent us by our mothers in the fond and blessed hope that some day they would be as the dew unto Israel; they were God's richest, choicest, holiest rain that ever fell upon the human heart. Here is a question for us, for the young and thoughtless. Have you repaid your loans to your parents? We were hard to manage, it may be, in childhood, but still they gave; the father toiled on with furrowed brow, and the mother sewed till her fingers seemed worn to the bone. And oh! the answers we gave back, the poor returns for the long toil. But the mother's love stood, by the inspiration of the Son of God never gave up, never despaired; and the result is you are what you are. Good-hearted dispositions, sacred lessons, heavenly examples, Christian influence, happy homes, the family honour, the family Bible—no one could mention the thousandth part of them—all these are loans from man to man. And when you come to think of it, is not religion itself in all its forms, high and low, but the effort to pay back the loan we get from God?

¶ I have an inscription which I should like to see hung over every home, over every heart, over every church: 'How much owest thou unto Thy Lord?' This is the question of questions of the sanctified soul: What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits to me? The cruel law of life is 'Pay me that thou owest'; but the gentle suggestion of God, meant to rule and teach the heart, is 'How much owest thou to Thy Lord?'[1]

[1] W. T. A. Barber.

Mercy.

Luke vi. 36.—'Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful' (RV).

MERCY is, therefore, an affirmation of Divine sonship, and the nearer the thoughts of men approach to a conception of the organic unity of the race, the more definite becomes the idea of mercy.

More than five hundred years before Christ, came the great reformation of Brahmanism, under the teaching of Gautama Buddha. The religion based on the Vedas was becoming formal, perfunctory, sacerdotal, exclusive, and Gautama Buddha

[1] J. B. Meharry.

was raised up to effect a profound reaction to spirituality. His wonderful life, his startling similarity to the Christ who was to come, are matters of history, and can be read of all men in the ancient sculptures preserved in the museum at Lahore. His dying prophecy, as cited by Dr. Oldenburg, suffices to lift him, in human estimation, above all the pre-Christian sages. 'Five hundred years,' he said, 'will this doctrine of the truth abide, and then shall come forth the Buddha Maitreya, the Buddha of brotherly love.' Four hundred and seventy years afterwards Jesus Christ was born at Bethlehem, and precisely five hundred years afterwards He ascended the mount, and preached these very words: 'Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful.' But the point is this: mercy was the ceaseless theme of Buddha's teaching; mercy was also the peculiar characteristic of his prominent disciples. The most remarkable of these was the mighty Buddhist King Asoka, who reigned in Gujerat three hundred and fifty years before Christ, who antedated all our great reforms, who abolished slavery, built hospitals, guarded the interests of animals, and covered India with rock inscriptions, to be seen to this day, inculcating the highest morality and the obligation of mercy to all that live. And his dying words put to the blush a vast proportion of the theology of to-day. 'Oh, Asoka, now thou wilt enter eternal bliss,' said one. 'Never,' he replied, 'of my own free will, will I enter Paradise while one poor soul wanders outside.'

What is the moral of this? It is here: the Buddha Maitreya has come, He 'who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven.' The heart of the Universal Soul has become incarnate specifically in Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God. He has declared, with an authority as transcendentally above that of Buddha as the heaven is above the earth that universal humanity is the outbirth of God, that the sonship manifested in Him is not His exclusive prerogative, but the attribute and possession of the race as a whole; and He was the enthusiast for humanity, the passionate lover of the people, the friend of the poor, the brother to the sinner, the comforter of the weary and the heavy laden. 'Go,' He said, 'and learn what this meaneth. I will have mercy and not sacrifice.' 'Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful.'

1. Let us be merciful to *those at home*. What is our guiding principle in dealing with those around us? Are we dictatorial in argument, severe in judgment, harsh in condemnation, sarcastic in repartee? There is no more unmerciful whip on earth than sarcasm, especially in the family circle. A sensitive nature would prefer a blow to a sneer. Again, with servants, are we exacting in our demands, severe in our rebukes, unfriendly in our manner? Do you think all this trivial? But to know that the Christ lives in you is to live fraternally, humanely, mercifully.

¶ The great test of goodness is to be good at home, patient with those with whom it is our duty to be patient, considerate of their physical exhaustion and their moral and spiritual limitations. Grand virtues are made for grand occasions, which come at long intervals in any life; but that sweet toil, that gracious observance of household trifles, on which the happiness of home depends, is an every-day, every-hour, and every-moment virtue, and one of the greatest blessings of humanity.

'Manners,' it has been said, 'are not like clothes; it is a bad thing to have two suits of them—one for best and one for every day. Wear your best manners all the time; they suffer more from being put away than by constant use. If you keep your best manners for company, they will fit you badly, and your visitor will suspect they were put on for him. Wear your second best clothes at home if you will, but not your second best manners. To whom is it worth while to be courteous, if not to the people you love best!'[1]

¶ I have already referred to some of the changes in Tolstoy's moods and manners that resulted from the changes in his religious outlook, but one point remains to be mentioned. When young and comparatively unrecognized, he had a tendency, as we have seen, to be arrogant and quarrelsome; but now in later life, when he had become the most famous man in Russia, he impressed many observers by his modesty and great consideration for other people's feelings.[2]

2. Let us be merciful to *our neighbours*. There

[1] Helen S. Dyer, *The Ideal Christian Home*, 37.

[2] Aylmer Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy: Later Years*, 481

is one way in which we are specially liable to be wanting in mercy to others. It is in our manner of talking about them. How eagerly some people help to spread an evil report, a report perhaps quite unsubstantiated, which they have too readily believed! And even if it be true, it is often a matter that need not be known. James says: 'If any man thinketh himself to be religious, while he bridleth not his tongue . . . this man's religion is vain.' It requires constant vigilance to enable us to rule that unruly member—the tongue. We ought not to take pleasure in giving an evil report of anyone, even when, as not infrequently is the case, it is desirable to do so for the protection of the innocent, or as a warning to others, or for other sufficient reason. Even here we can be merciful; we can do with regret what has to be done. We too often share the sin of a scandal-bearer by taking pleasure in his story.

¶ 'Miss Mann . . . was a perfectly honest, conscientious woman, who had performed duties in her day from whose severe anguish many a human Peri, gazelle-eyed, silken-tressed, and silver-tongued, would have shrunk appalled; she had passed alone through protracted scenes of suffering, exercised rigid self-denial, made large sacrifices of time, money, health, for those who had repaid her only by ingratitude, and now her main —almost her sole—fault was, that she was censorious. Censorious she certainly was. . . . She dissected impartially almost all her acquaintances; she made few distinctions; she allowed scarcely any one to be good.'[1]

3. Another class of our fellow creatures to whom we must show mercy consists of *the degraded*, who are naturally repulsive to us. Thank God, there are those who show mercy to such people, and guide the nation to do the same. Our prisons are no longer places of inhuman suffering. The health and cleanliness of our criminals are considered, good conduct is encouraged, and the discipline is supervised and controlled under Christian laws. When a convict enters an English prison he does not find that mercy and hope are altogether left behind. But how do we personally feel towards the degraded? If you see a miserable man or woman hanging about a gin-palace, broken in health, filthy and ragged, using foul words, what is your feeling towards such a one? Is it simply contempt and loathing? Think what you might have become yourself if you had been born and bred as that poor creature was. Often he is one who in his journey of life has practically fallen among thieves. He has very likely been robbed of every chance of a respectable life; has been taught to thieve, to lie, to drink; has been stripped of the innocence of childhood, poisoned by bad example. There you see him, sore wounded, half dead to all that is pure and true. If it be a woman, how could she, misguided, unaided, do other than she has done, be other than she is? Now it seems a general rule that God bestows His blessings mediately. But it may be that it is impossible for you to be the good Samaritan to these poor creatures, to bind up, as it were, with your own hands their wounds; but you can be sorry for them, you can pity them with a tenderness that is a form, a phase, of love. 'Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful.'

¶ Into one pitiful field of work, the work of tenderness and compassion for the fallen, rescue and prevention work among women, Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone had thrown the full fervour of their hearts. . . . In the streets of London they worked with tireless energy; she shrank from nothing. This is not the place to enlarge on this subject. But when walking home one night with a friend, Mr. Gladstone turned back to rescue a poor lost creature. 'But what will Mrs. Gladstone say if you take this woman home?' Mr. Gladstone turned round in surprise. 'Why, it is to Mrs. Gladstone I am taking her.'[1]

4. Be merciful to *animals*. Kindness to animals, of which we think so little, is but an extension of that love of God of which we say so much. Mercy to God's creatures is the final application of the mercy of the merciful God. A mercy which arrested itself and stopped short at man would not be mercy, it would be a whim, an impulse; certainly it would not be Divine, it would be less than human, weak, arbitrary, unreasoning. Mercy, to be worthy of God, must be universal, for, as nothing can be shut out from His action, so nothing should be excluded from His

[1] Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley*, x.

[1] *Catherine Gladstone*, 249.

care. And it is by man, and through man, that His care travels on to the furthest bounds of creation. Man is the main channel through which mercy flows. And if man checked the flow of mercy, and refused it to the creatures beneath him, he would no longer be human, he would be inhuman, for he is human only in so far as he approaches the Divine. He comes in to view as a worker with God, dressing the earth and keeping it, rearing cattle, tending sheep. But what of hunting, what of the killing of animals for sacrifice and for food? He might do these things, and take part in the struggle for life, and yet not be cruel. The shepherd, it is true, like young David, might slay a lion and a bear, and in the slaying of them save many another unprotected life; and he might feed sheep for food and for sacrifice, but he could still gently lead and carry them in his arms whilst alive, and, with ninety-nine safe and sound, still search for one that was lost. It is not the taking of life, but the inflicting of unnecessary pain, and indifference towards undeserving suffering, that constitute cruelty.

¶ Fabre the French entomologist was interested, as a scientist, in discovering whether the bite of the Black-bellied Tarantula, deadly to insects, was dangerous to other animals, and to man, or whether it was not, in the latter case, a negligible accident. He therefore experimented upon a bird.

'I make a Tarantula bite the leg of a young, well-fledged Sparrow, ready to leave the nest. A drop of blood flows: the wounded spot is surrounded by a reddish circle, changing to purple. The bird almost immediately loses the use of its leg, which drags, with the toes doubled in; it hops upon the other. Apart from this, the patient does not seem to trouble much about his hurt; his appetite is good. My daughters feed him on flies, bread-crumb, apricot-pulp. He is sure to get well, he will recover his strength; the poor victim of the curiosity of science will be restored to liberty. This is the wish, the intention of us all. Twelve hours later, the hope of a cure increases; the invalid takes nourishment readily; he clamours for it, if we keep him waiting. But the leg still drags. I set this down to a temporary paralysis which will soon disappear. Two days after he refuses his food. Wrapping himself in his stoicism and his rumpled feathers, the Sparrow hunches into a ball, now motionless, now twitching. My girls take him in the hollow of their hands and warm him with their breath. The spasms become more frequent. A gasp proclaims that all is over. The bird is dead.

There was a certain coolness among us at the evening meal. I read mute reproaches, because of my experiment, in the eyes of my home-circle; I read an unspoken accusation of cruelty all around me. The death of the unfortunate Sparrow had saddened the whole family. I myself was not without some remorse of conscience: the poor result achieved seemed to me too dearly bought. I am not made of the stuff of those who, without turning a hair, rip up live Dogs to find out nothing in particular.' [1]

Inoffensive Judging.

Luke vi. 37.—'Judge not, and ye shall not be judged.'

THE puzzles of the Sermon on the Mount begin to be solved as soon as one remembers that it was spoken in a human language, and that all human languages have this limitation, that you cannot say in them all you mean, but must trust to the hearer to supply part of the meaning. If you try to say the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, you find that the reservations and exceptions and qualifications will make your speech intolerably long, and none of it will be remembered at the end of it. The greatest of all teachers knew this, and He therefore spoke the truth as men could best lay hold of it; He spoke it briefly and broadly, trusting men to add by help of common-sense that which would balance and correct and complete it.

1. Here with His 'Judge not' He has himself supplied the suggestion as to how common-sense should qualify the precept. It is 'Judge not, and ye shall not be judged,' or, as it is in Matthew, 'that ye be not judged.' Now, this second clause evidently defines the kind of judgment which is wrong; it is the kind of judgment which we should not like to have passed upon ourselves. To judge one's neighbour, then, is unchristian, so far as it would be unjust that we should be ourselves judged in the same way. But there are

[1] *The Life of Jean Henri Fabre the Entomologist*, 152.

ways in which we do not object to be judged ourselves. That another man should pass a kind judgment on us is a thing we do not object to, but desire. That he should pass on us not a kind, but a merely just and correct judgment is a thing which we may not wholly desire, but still which we should not have the face to object to; we should *say* we were quite content, even if we did not feel so. And, indeed, whichever of us is wise will honestly prefer that he should be estimated carefully and thoughtfully, even if coldly, rather than that his reputation should be at the mercy of the reckless chatter of people who may mean no ill in the world, but do not take the trouble to find out if the things they say and the tales they repeat are true. Well, then, if we are ready to be judged ourselves, provided our judge is kind, and wise, and careful, do we break Christ's command if we kindly, and wisely, and carefully judge our neighbour?

2. What if we are not only content to be dealt with as we deal with others, but actually make our judgment of them a judgment of ourselves? The fault-finding which Jesus reprobates is that finding of fault which is a sidelong praise of oneself: 'Such a one lives loosely, but how respectable am I! such a one is grasping and mean—let him imitate my generosity; such a one is a very poor creature—what a pity he has none of my fine spirit'! But this is not the only way in which we can find fault. No doubt we can use our fellow-men's imperfections as foils to show off to our own admiring eyes our own superiorities. But can one not also use one's fellow's faulty nature, not as a foil, but as a mirror—a mirror in which we discover a faulty nature which is our own, and which, but for this mirror, we should not have seen? We are noting, let us say, some acquaintance's deplorable fall from rectitude or virtue. What then? Is it that we may bestow an approving smile on our own unstained, honourable self? Then 'Judge not' is the word for us. But if it is that we may recall with a shudder how once a whisper of a bad ambition, a prick of covetousness, a hot gust of passion, shook our very soul, even ours, and our footing had wellnigh slipped; if the moral disaster of another man lights up deeps of evil inclination in our own being which we had forgotten, or never had explored in the decorous passage of our days; then who will blame us for giving the true name of the sin of our fellow-man, when the naming of it is a confession and a deploring of our own? For here with what judgment we judge, we are by our own sentence judged; and with what measure we mete, it is measured to us by ourselves again.

¶ I have been driven to ask myself what I am myself, and I find that all the mischief I discovered in others and in the age were really rioting in myself. Of all spirits, I believe the spirit of judging is the worst, and it has had the rule of me I cannot tell you how dreadfully and how long. Looking for the faults, which I had a secret consciousness were in myself, in other people, and accusing them instead of looking for their faults in myself, where I should have been sure to find them all, this, I find, has more hindered my progress in love and gentleness and sympathy than all things else. I never knew what the words 'Judge not, that ye be not judged,' meant before; now they seem to me some of the most awful, necessary, and beautiful in the whole Word of God.[1]

Judging.

Luke vi. 37.—'Judge not.'

In what sense is 'judging' forbidden? It is manifest that the two pairs of terms in the text are antithetical, and represent two opposite spirits, the spirit which 'judges' and 'condemns' being contrasted with one that 'forgives' and 'gives,' as the typical anti-Christian spirit is contrasted with the spirit of Christ. It is always safer to lay stress on the spirit from which actions proceed than on definite actions themselves, since it is the temper they proceed from that gives them their quality. We proceed therefore to ask, What is the temper condemned by our Lord in His commandment 'Judge not'? It is a happy thing for England, and should be a subject for gratitude, that our word 'to judge' bears so good a sense as it does; and that we have really no word that, without explanation, can stand in this place as the opposite of 'give' and 'forgive.' What the context requires is a word to express the action of a selfish or an implacable disposition; of a

[1] *The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, i. 129.

temper that holds itself aloof in disdain, or, at least, in distrust, without making an attempt to understand, far less to pity or sympathize—the reverse of such a character as that sketched for us by Paul in his praise of charity; the reverse of that Character which we see moving through the pages of the Gospels, giving Himself to all who asked, and forgiving sins, the Son of the Father who is kind to the unthankful and the evil.

Perhaps we get as near to it as we can by simply keeping the Greek word 'critical,' which can, alas! be used not only of that patient spirit which weighs events in all their circumstances, and strives to estimate characters as they really are, but also of a spirit which takes no such pains to be just, which never makes allowances, which takes credit for interpreting everything for the worse as 'knowing the world,' which detects faults, and is blind to virtues, because faults alone are of interest to it.

But why is this critical, censorious spirit so disastrous that it is singled out thus for condemnation as the very spirit of Antichrist? There are several reasons.

1. The first reason plainly is because it has a form of godliness. It professes to be Divine, and is therefore a libel upon the character of God. Let us suppose a crime has been committed, and committed by our own kin or acquaintance; do we regard them in the same hard spirit as if they were strangers? No; because we know more about them than the mere action taken by itself: we know their character, and whether it was through sudden passion or through infirmity of will that they were betrayed into what is so shocking. We know them, that is one thing; and we love them, that is another; and so, though we do not extenuate their fault, and may acquiesce in their sentence, we do not cease to love them, and we do not lose hope of their spiritual recovery. The reason why we can, all of us, trust so securely in God's mercy is because He knows us, and because He loves us; not only knows whereof we are made, and remembers that we are but dust, but knows how long we struggled before we were worsted; knows that, although there has been this or that backwater in our lives, yet the main current has set steadily in the channel of duty. 'He knows about it all. He knows, He knows'—knows and loves—that is the Christian consolation. And this spirit of knowledge and love, which we can each have of our immediate circle, which God has of us all, is the temper we are to strive after in order to be the children of our Father. We are to aim at penetrating below the outward appearance—even of a crime. After the world has passed judgment, and we, as members of the world, have subscribed to it; when the law has been avenged and society has purged out the offending leaven, then the duty of a Christian, if circumstances bring him into touch with the crime, only begins. His duty is to understand, and pity, and keep open the gates of the Divine mercy. And in lesser things it is the charitable judgment, the judgment of knowledge or imagination, and the judgment of sympathy, that are demanded of Christians. It was a sad fall, we say; yes, and not the first, no—and yet

> Haply yon wretch—so famous for his falls,
> Got them beneath the devil-defended walls
> Of some high virtue he had vow'd to win;
> And that which you and I
> Call his besetting sin
> Is but the fume of his peculiar fire
> Of inmost contrary desire,
> And means wild willingness for her to die,
> Dash'd with despondence of her favour sweet;
> He, fiercer fighting in his worst defeat
> Than you or I
> Did ever fight in our best victory.

¶ Than Mr. Gladstone nobody was more chary of passing moral censures. What he said of himself in 1842, when he was three and thirty, held good to the end:—

'Nothing grows upon me so much with lengthening life as the sense of the difficulties, or rather the impossibilities, with which we are beset whenever we attempt to take to ourselves the functions of the Eternal Judge (except in reference to ourselves where judgment is committed to us), and to form any accurate idea of relative merit and demerit, good and evil, in actions. The shades of the rainbow are not so nice, and the sands of the sea-shore are not such a multitude, as are all the subtle, shifting, blending forms of thought and of circumstances that go to determine the character of us and of our acts. But

there is One that seeth plainly and judgeth righteously.' [1]

2. It is disastrous also from its effects upon both subject and object; it curses 'him that gives and him that takes.' It is disastrous to those who surrender themselves to it, because it corrupts their faith in human nature. To be always looking for faults is to cease to be able to see anything else; so that one comes in time to the temper of Shakespeare's Iago, who was 'nothing if not critical,' and at last to the temper of Satan, who said, 'Doth Job fear God for nought?' Further, such a habit of outside scrutiny indisposes us to look within. The acquired keenness which can detect even a mote in our brother's eye is blind to the beam in our own; and from being merely critical we become hypercritical.

And as to its object. There, too, it is ruinous; for our judgments have often a formative power, and make people what we think them. If you think a man a fool, ten to one every time you see him he will give you still more cause to think so, because no one can do himself justice in an atmosphere that is hostilely critical. The critical spirit is like an east wind, which makes people shrivel up into themselves. They may adopt your estimate, and think it hopeless to try to become better.

In midst of my toil had they but thought
To stretch a finger, I would have caught
Gladly such aid, to bear me through
Some bitter duty I had to do:
And when it was done, had I but heard
One breath of applause, one cheering word,
One cry of 'Courage!' amid the strife,
So weighted for me, with death or life,
How would it have nerved my soul to strain
Through the whirl of the coming surge again! [2]

Giving and Gaining.

Luke vi. 38.—'Give, and it shall be given unto you.'

One day in India I was standing on a great mountain brow, looking into a plain that stretched far beneath. Out of the heart of this plain, about five miles distant, rose a saddle-backed mountain crowned by a fortress that seemed impregnable. My companion, an officer, said 'That fortress marks the point at which British supremacy was definitely established. A company of men, in the night, took up guns and planted them on the level of the fortress. The work was done, empire was achieved, and the deed is the pride of the British army still.'

So spoke my friend, and I, though no lover of war, looked at the place with a kind of tumult in my soul. While I was gazing, a little patch of white at the bottom of the mountain on which the fortress stood thrust itself upon my notice. 'What is that?' said I. My companion handed me his field glass, and I saw a square of little crosses. 'What are these?' I asked. 'These,' said he, 'are the graves of the men who took the fortress. Our empire is built upon sacrifice.'

What a sense of the distinction of those men thrilled my heart as I gazed on that group of crosses! We all wish to impress ourselves, to live in minds made nobler by our presence here. How the soldiers buried yonder fulfilled that ideal! Probably they were ordinary men, very un-ideal in their aspirations and in their conduct, but one day they gave all for England, they took their lives in their hands, they sacrificed homes, prospects, everything, and unto death fought for their fatherland. They achieved immortality. It is not their military success that impresses us; it is their sacrificial act and its issues. It lifts them, though unnamed, into the ranks of the heroes, and proves upon our pulses the contention of Christ that we gain by giving.

1. The fertility of the principle of sacrifice has been recognized by all true masters. Many of you may know Emerson's great poem ending with the words,

When half-gods go,
The gods arrive.

The poem is a tribute to the power of the love which is so great that it is sacrificial. It begins with the lines,

Give all to love,
Obey thy heart;
Friends, kindred, days,
Estate, good fame,
Plans, credit and the Muse,
Nothing refuse.

[1] *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone*, i. 196.
[2] Margaret J. Preston.

'Tis a brave master,
Let it have scope;
Follow it utterly,
Hope beyond hope;
High and more high;
It dies into noon.

And the converse fact is true. Tennyson, chronicling the failure of those who rejected sacrifice, pictured the Lotos-eaters entangled among sensuous joys, and there forgetting home and duty, and the slow toils that enrich experience and make character; and Homer, long before him, represented Tantalus, with his tempted but unsatisfied appetites of thirst and hunger, as the victim of his own insatiable selfishness. We do not gain except by giving.

2. Let us give ourselves to life because it is the gift of God, because it is the Divine Spirit working within us. Let us give ourselves to life because Christ gave His life for us on the bitter cross, and wells of salvation will spring up in our own hearts. We shall achieve and possess a joy that passes not away.

(1) In our profession or trade we gain by giving. Give it our loving interest, our constant thought, our ungrudged attention, and we shall get the best gifts it has to bestow. And remember, it is from the hard-working men and women representing the 'every man' that the really distinguished people come, and not from those who bear the early marks of genius. People with early marks of genius grow up idle as a consequence, and so often sink gradually through obscurity into oblivion. The hares of life are every day losing through trusting to their powers of swiftness, and the tortoises are winning the race through plodding.

I once heard a very uncommon preacher pleading, in a congregation into which he had been inducted, for time in which to do his work. He said, 'I know no royal road to preaching.' There was an eloquence in the massive brow, the tired eyes, the resolute face, the square dogged jaw behind those words that gave them indescribable influence. You felt face to face with a man. I have heard a fluffy-haired boy speak of dashing off sermons. How can a man do that? The words of eternal life are not cheap. They are brought with sweat and toil and prayer from the inmost core of the soul. Nor are the works of eternal life cheap. All sincere works are the works of eternal life. The man who digs the field or ploughs it, the man who builds the house or any part of it, the man who plans the business or forms the least unit in it, is working the works of eternal life. It is worth while to do it well. In all our toil we gain by giving. Give with all your might; give good measure, and you will get your heart's desire. There is a supreme religious value in such life.

(2) And we gain by giving in the offices of friendship and love. Here, perhaps supremely, Christ's law applies. If your aim is to do all you can for people you love, you will be infinitely enriched by your fellowship with them. A self-effacing is a happy heart in this connection, while a self-considering heart is miserable. There is deep truth in the lines:

Love that asketh love again
Finds the barter nought but pain;
Love that giveth its full store
Aye receives as much and more.

Love exacting nothing back
Never knoweth any lack;
Love compelling love to pay
Sees him bankrupt every day.

'I lay down my life,' said our blessed Lord; 'No man taketh it from me.' How that word explains His empery! Who could have taken His life had He resisted? Why, while He was dreaming of the Kingdom of God in smiling Nazareth, He could have chosen to keep His dreams to Himself, and live and die the supreme Sybarite. Who could have blamed Him? Had he not a right to become the epicure of His own emotions? But He chose to come forth from Galilee, the Preacher of the Kingdom of God. He chose to give His life. He could have chosen to fall in with the Rabbis of His time. Who could have been more popular in the schools than the brilliant young Rabbi from Nazareth? He could have won the applause of the Pharisees instead of serving the people. He chose to be the friend of publicans and sinners. 'The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.' He chose to do it. He

could have evaded the Cross when it frowned out upon Him. He could have escaped from Jerusalem and from the plotting of His enemies, but He was willing to die for their good. He chose to die. And has He not gained by giving? Enshrined in the heart of humanity, enthroned among the aspirations of men, more living to-day than ever—'our highest Orpheus,' as Carlyle beautifully says—He lost in His generation, but He has gained eternally. For the very truth of truths is voiced by the same writer when, in treating all life as a symbol of God, and religion as the highest symbol, he adds: 'If thou ask to what height man has carried it in this manner, look at our divinest symbol, on Jesus of Nazareth and His life, and His biography, and what followed therefrom. Higher has the human thought not yet reached. This is Christianity and Christendom, a symbol of quite perennial, infinite character, whose significance will ever demand to be anew inquired into, and anew made manifest.'[1]

God's Giving.

Luke vi. 38.—'Good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over.'

1. THAT is a cheering word. Yet it is not given by one who has not tested its value, for, indeed, this law which our Lord detects and declares as a generalization from human experience lies at the very root of the action by which God sent His Son to redeem the world. The same world lay there before the Father's eyes, going its own way, immersed in its own interests. It rolled on as we see it still, hard, harsh, and repellent, as if it had but one function—to refuse God an entry, to weld itself into a solid weight of godless indifference. It would offer Him nothing; it would take no notice of Him; it would shut itself up in its own blindness; it would stop its ears and harden its heart, and make gross its senses, lest at any time, caught unawares in a momentary weakness, it should see with its eyes and hear with its heart, and be converted and yield. So it went on suspicious, distrustful, hateful, and hating, and the temptation was to say, 'So be it, in the bed that he has made, in the same shall he lie down. Ephraim has turned unto his idols; let him alone.' But what did God do, what was His method for overcoming this godless repugnance? He simply gave—that was His one way of dissolving this stubborn refusal. He gave. He gave Himself. He went out towards men in acts of confidence, in motions of simplest trust; He spent Himself in efforts on their behalf; He unlocked His resources; He would not be denied; He poured out new offers when the old were refused; He gave them of His best, gave them prophets and messengers; He would not be kept back from giving, and at last, when He had given all in vain, He gave them His uttermost possession. When every other gift had been spurned, and still the blind world was unwon, He, who had in His house yet His one beloved Son, said, 'I will give Him; they will reverence my Son.' Nor was even that the end of the giving, for when the wicked men had met this supreme gift with the answer, 'Here is the heir; come, let us kill him,' still the very blood which they poured out as they murdered Him became itself the gift, gladly, freely surrendered by the Son on their behalf. His very death itself was given to be their life, the gift of all gifts. 'Take, eat, here is my body given for you; drink ye all of this, this is my blood given for you and for many.'

2. At last the way was opened! God's unstinted gift—that is the force which compels surrender. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son—there is the secret word of power, the word which is for ever at work undermining the toughest resistance, piercing through the blindest walls, creeping in through the blackest heart of obstinacy. That is the whisper which beats up against the closed windows of the soul. Who can, in the end, hold out against that giving? God gave, and because He gave, therefore, at last, it was given unto Him; therefore hearts melt, souls quicken, and love wakes, and the new humanity begins to show itself through the hard shell of the old. The earth changes as under the soft, south wind in spring. The sap begins to run, and tenderness is astir, and the tumult of a great hope shakes the people, and tears of joy and of thanksgiving are raining from glad eyes that never thought they would shed tears like this, the Divine Society gathers and grows round the central gift of God, and the great hymn goes up of Moses and the

[1] F. A. Russell, *The Crucible of Experience*, 94ff.

Lamb, and, lo, there are multitudes now at last, multitudes won out of a world that seemed so love-forsaken, so godless, so repugnant!

3. God gave, and whatever is given back to Him is won for Him solely by the force of that eternal gift of His which draws it out by the vehement pressure of its own self-surrender. That is what is meant by the theological doctrine of grace; that is the truth which kindles the theology of Paul and of Augustine. God begins; that is all they had to say! God takes the first step. He does not wait until we give indications of a response, or until we invite His approach. If He did we were lost! Rather it is because we make no sign, refuse to return, harden ourselves against Him, and are stiffening down into invincible resistance that He steps out on His side and initiates the movement for recovery; that He discharges first the energy which will enable us to respond. God's action precedes ours; God gives; God commits Himself to us while we are still sinners, still stubborn. By a gift, by grace, are we saved. That is the way in which His pardon reaches us.

And as this is the primary act of our salvation, so it is the continuous rule of the saved life. It never ceases to work on the same law of grace. Every motion we make, every effort after holiness, every word and deed by which we win our way towards righteousness has been possible only because God has initiated it, because God has given us first that force by which we give back to Him that which He desires. By His grace in loving us before we love Him He quickens us with the power of loving Him back again.

He seeks for ours as we do seek for His;
Nay, O my soul, ours is far more His bliss
Than His is ours; at least it so doth seem,
  Both in His own and our esteem.

His earnest love, His infinite desires,
His living, endless, and devouring fires,
Do rage in thirst, and fervently require
  A love 'tis strange it should desire.

We cold and careless are, and scarcely think
Upon the glorious spring whereat we drink.
Did He not love us we could be content:
  We wretches are indifferent!

'Tis death, my soul, to be indifferent;
Set forth thyself unto thy whole extent,
And all the glory of His passion prize,
  Who for thee lives, Who for thee dies.[1]

4. Now, as it is true that the more God gives us the more we give Him in return, so also is it true that the more we give the more God gives to us.

¶ Luther tells us that there was once a very wealthy and powerful monastery, whose abbot was not only a very holy but a very liberal and beneficent man, so that he was distinguished not less as a father to the poor than as the most exemplary head of a religious establishment. Nor was this good man's charity without its fruits; for God, who does not allow Himself to be surpassed by human liberality, most abundantly blessed the temporal affairs of the abbey, so that it became richer and more prosperous by its good ruler's profuse generosity than another could have made it by a niggard and avaricious administration of its funds. The noble-hearted abbot at last died, and to him succeeded one who immediately began to restrain the works of charity, mercy, and kindness for which the abbey had been so long renowned. He removed from their posts those officials who had been associated with his predecessor in his deeds of benevolence, he closed his doors against strangers, and withdrew all alms from the needy, pretending that he was obliged to practise the strictest economy. But lo, from that time God withdrew the bountiful hand with which He had heretofore bestowed His gifts, so that at last there was barely enough to sustain the monks in the most frugal manner, and the monastery, once so rich, was reduced to the last extremities of poverty. One day about this time, a young traveller came to the abbey gate asking for hospitality. Spite of many entreaties, he was for a long time refused admission, and only at length allowed by the porter to enter unknown to the abbot. When seated in the guest chamber, amongst many other questions, the youth asked the door-keeper if he knew the reason why the monastery, once so rich and prosperous, had without any seeming cause become so poor and needy? On the porter replying that he did not, his questioner (knowing the avarice of

[1] Thomas Traherne.

the abbot) answered, Well the true reason is, that formerly there dwelt here two brothers, the eldest of whom was named '*Date*' meaning 'Give,' the youngest '*Dabitur*' meaning 'It shall be given.' The senior of these brothers, being wrongfully dismissed, the junior, moved by indignation, departed of his own accord. This is the cause, continued the stranger, of all your misfortunes; therefore, if you will listen to my advice, you will recall Brother 'Date' or 'Give,' and then the other will very quickly return; if you do this, the Monastery will very soon recover its former prosperity and greatness.[1]

The tale is told by Browning in his poem *The Twins*.

Grand rough old Martin Luther
Bloomed fables—flowers on furze,
The better the uncouther:
Do roses stick like burrs?

A beggar asked an alms
One day at an abbey-door,
Said Luther; but, seized with qualms,
The Abbot replied, 'We're poor!

'Poor, who had plenty once,
When gifts fell thick as rain:
But they give us nought, for the nonce,
And how should we give again?'

Then the beggar, 'See your sins!
Of old, unless I err,
Ye had brothers for inmates, twins,
Date and Dabitur.

While Date was in good case
Dabitur flourished too:
For Dabitur's lenten face
No wonder if Date rue.

Would ye retrieve the one?
Try and make plump the other!
When Date's penance is done,
Dabitur helps his brother.

Only, beware relapse!'
The Abbot hung his head.
This beggar might be perhaps
An angel, Luther said.

[1] W. R. Villiers.

The Same Measure.

Luke vi. 38.—'With the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.'

1. THESE familiar words seem some of the most awful words in the Bible. For, in the first place, they are so plainly the words of that justice which all men acknowledge, that we not only believe, we *feel*, that they must be true. They are not a matter of faith which we receive on the authority of God. The moment we trust ourselves to think at all of the matter, we cannot help seeing that it could not be otherwise; we cannot doubt them, if we believe in a judgment at all. In that judgment men must look to be dealt with in the same spirit, by the same measures, according to the truth and righteousness and generosity which they have shown when it was their turn to be judges, their turn to show mercy, to pass opinion, to help and share and give. Can we imagine anyone claiming to be judged by a different measure? Can we imagine that the forgiveness, the allowances, that men would not grant to others, they count upon for themselves? Can we imagine that they think they may deal with men harshly, but that God ought to deal with them tenderly?

2. That is one thing which makes these words so awful, that we see for ourselves that it *must* be as they say. The other is that, while we feel the certainty of the law and judgment, we cannot see or guess *how* it will be carried out. It lies in the darkness of the time to come; and there, in due time, in ways that we know not, at a moment which none can tell, the sentence will have its effect, the measure will be measured back. All we know is that, some time or other, a man's deeds will be returned upon him, and he will find out by what happens to himself how he dealt with his brethren, and what God, His Maker and Judge, thought of his dealings.

And the fearful thing to think of is that, for the most part, this is to be in another world—another world, where all things will be different; another world, where all things will be so much greater for blessedness and for anguish than they are here; another world, where what is to be is to be for good and for ever. It is there, for the

most part, that the law which cannot be broken will have its fulfilment, and the measure be measured back to men. Here it is so only partially and sometimes. It is so sufficiently to awaken our thoughts and fears. We do see, from time to time, strange and sudden instances of a man being overtaken by a trouble and humiliation answering in a wonderful manner to his own manifest wrong-doings. And do we not in our own consciences sometimes trace dimly with surprise and awe, in the things which God's providence brings upon us, in the trials which are become the accustomed portion of our life, and meet us daily, the very likeness to those things which, long ago, were the sins and offences of our lives?

Men see in the harshness and looseness of the unfair judgments passed on them the reflection and likeness of the judgments which they once so carelessly uttered. Men realize in the disappointment and unkindness of their own children what their own parents once had to grieve over in them. These things do happen. The awful rule of the measure measured back does show itself in our real life and experience here. But it is only partially for this world. This life is a life of preparation, of waiting, of grace, of possible repentance and change and amendment. The rule is put off here, because here all things are imperfect and but for a time, and of very short continuance. If we judged only by this life, it would seem to be something fulfilled and acted on, but more often not. Where it is to be fulfilled and accomplished completely and universally is in that unknown world to come to which we are all hastening.

But, whether here or there, this is the rule of God's government; this is the rule by which we shall all have our lives and doings tried and judged. 'With the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.'

If now I am sick in chewing the bitter cud
  Of sweet past sin, though solaced by Thy grace
And ofttimes strengthened by Thy Flesh and
    Blood,
  How shall I then stand up before Thy face
When from Thine eyes repentance shall be hid
  And utmost Justice stand in Mercy's place?
When every sin I thought or spoke or did
  Shall meet me at the inexorable bar,
And there be no man standing in the mid
  To plead for me; while star fallen after star
With heaven and earth are like a ripened shock,
  And all time's mighty works and wonders are
Consumed as in a moment; when no rock
  Remains to fall on me, no tree to hide,
But I stand all creation's gazing-stock,
  Exposed and comfortless on every side,
Placed trembling in the final balances
  Whose poise this hour, this moment, must be
    tried.[1]

¶ In the biography of George Frederic Watts we read: 'He was impressed by the description in a Zoroastrian writing of the visible form of a beautiful maiden who arrived to greet the dead after they have crossed over from the here to the hereafter; and who in answer to the Soul's question, "Who art thou?" replied, "I am thyself, thine own deeds have made me." He referred to this at times when he had taken himself to task, and said, "I don't want that figure to be ugly."'[2]

Recompense.

Luke vi. 38.—'With the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.'

Our Lord is here uttering not so much a prophecy as a great rule of life. It is a truth on which we may generally rely, that what we give we shall get, what we sow we shall reap, what we pay we shall be repaid.

1. First of all it is worth observing that it holds good within the limits of our own selves.

(1) It is true of the *body*. Everybody who knows anything about the subject will tell you that if you would be strong you must take care to treat your body fairly, with fresh air, exercise, and simple food. Plato reminds us that Homer never sets sweet sauces before his heroes. If you wish to have a body that can do what you may call upon it to do, to perform work, resist strain, and bear fatigue you must practise temperance in food and drink. If you give way to greed or the excessive indulgence of any appetite, this will recoil upon you. In early years there is such a superabundance of life and energy as to seem practically inexhaustible; there is a very strong temptation in youth to imagine that the laws of health are

[1] Christina Rossetti.
[2] Vol. ii. 243.

only for the feeble and the aged; yet it is assuredly true that for every excessive demand made upon youth's vitality, payment will have to be made sooner or later. It is to the follies and excesses and abuses of his younger days that many a man may trace the enfeebled health of adult life.

(2) It is true also of the *mind*. If you would have your mind quick and vigorous you must exercise it upon real tasks; you must make it work. 'He is a sharp lad,' said a father describing his boy to a new tutor, 'but he will not work his brains.' How true that is of many! Their fault is not the lack of brains, but the neglect to work what they have. A boy who trifles with his brains must not be surprised if they prove useless to him when he gives them work to do. If he reads his author with a 'crib,' let him not wonder that he fails utterly with 'unseens': if he always looks first to see what the answer is, let him not wonder if he has no confidence in his own results; if he copies from others, let him not wonder that he learns nothing: if he reads only literature of the snicks and snacks and snippets order, let him not wonder that the taste for reading what is worth reading is lost. He is receiving in himself the same measure that he meted out to himself.

(3) More important still, this law is true of the *spirit*, that is, of the power of will. Your character is moulded by every act of the will. If you are guilty of a mean act, it is a great mistake to suppose that the end has come when the act itself is done. The matter does not end there; one mean act makes a second mean act all the easier, until a habit or character of meanness becomes, or may become, gradually formed. So of acts of envy, or spite, or deceit or any other kind of wrong-doing. Easy is the descent to Avernus. All that we do helps to make us become all that we are. That is why the Wise Man says: 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.' 'I was not going to trouble to do my best,' says a boy contemptuously of something he has undertaken. My young friend, if you go on like that the time will come when you will not be able to do your best, when you do think it worth while. 'For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.'

¶ How does a habit grow? Professor Henry Drummond has pointed out that the rains which first fall upon the plain must chisel out furrows in which the waters flow away. But succeeding rains do not cut out new furrows; they follow in the courses already provided, and a more recent writer, commenting on this, says: 'Physiologically a like process takes place in the brain. Nerve discharges plough a way for themselves, and succeeding identical or similar discharges follow in the path marked by their predecessors. The channels deepen with every discharge and order the brain such wise that by and by the thought-paths are so clearly marked that the ease with which a nerve-discharge may proceed along the old road precludes the possibility of its making for itself a new highway.' No greater argument than this can be found for early training. It is of the highest importance to make habitual and automatic, as soon as possible, as many useful customs and actions as we can, and to guard carefully against customs and actions likely to be detrimental to us. Nothing that affects our life and character is unimportant. Our character is the sum total of our thoughts and actions. The chalk cliffs of Dover are the skeletons of millions upon millions of tiny organisms, and our individual lives are built up by the recurrence of transient thoughts and deeds. Professor James is our greatest authority on this subject, and he says: 'The physiological study of mental conditions is . . . the most powerful ally of hortatory ethics. The hell to be endured hereafter, of which theology tells, is no worse than the hell we make for ourselves in this world by habitually fashioning our character in the wrong way. Could the young realize how soon they will become mere walking bundles of habits, they would give more heed to their conduct while in the plastic state. We are spinning our own fates, good or evil, and never to be undone. Every smallest stroke of virtue or vice leaves its never so little scar. The drunken Rip Van Winkle, in Jefferson's play, excuses himself for every fresh dereliction by saying, "I won't count this time." Well, he may not count it, and a kind Heaven may not count it; but it is being counted none the less. Down among the nerve cells and fibres the molecules are counting it, registering it and storing it up, to be used against him when the next temptation comes. Nothing we ever do is, in strict scientific literal-

ness, wiped out. . . . As we become permanent drunkards by so many separate drinks, so we become saints in the moral, authorities and experts in the practical and scientific spheres, by so many separate acts and hours of work.' [1]

2. The general truth we are considering is seen to hold good in another sphere—in our dealings with our companions. As we treat our fellows, so will they treat us; as we give to them, so will they return to us. The Bible is full of instances.

(1) When poor Naomi had lost her husband and her two sons, and was returning to her own country widowed and lonely, her daughter-in-law Ruth would not desert her. 'Ruth clave unto her.' Ruth showed kindness to Naomi, and when she arrived in the new, strange country, Naomi's kinsman showed kindness to her. She entered the land comforting and supporting Naomi, and in that land she found a husband to comfort and support her.

(2) And if the Bible gives us examples of kindness repaid by kindness, it gives us examples of deceit repaid by deceit. Jacob deceived his blind old father; by an act of cruel deception he wrung his father's heart. See the retribution that followed. As he had deceived Isaac, so his own sons deceived him. As he came in the borrowed raiment of Esau, so they came bearing Joseph's coat of many colours. 'This have we found,' they said, 'know now whether it be thy son's coat or no.' He was paid in his own coin.

(3) Once again, call to mind the story of Haman in the Book of Esther. Haman, the proud favourite of the Persian king, enraged because Mordecai the Jew would not bow down before him, plotted the wholesale massacre of the Jews throughout the kingdom; and in bloodthirsty anticipation he had a gallows made seventy-five feet high to hang Mordecai upon. But the plotter was out-plotted. He himself was hanged upon his own gallows. 'In the same net which he hid privily was his foot taken.' The same measure that he had meted had been measured to him again.

¶ When he was a boy of ten years Agassiz went with his mother to Grindelwald. One day the woman and the child visited the Echo Valley. Knowing that the boy had never heard the echo, the mother told the child that for men there was an old man in the mountain, that for boys there was a boy who dwelt in the mountain, who would answer anyone who spoke to him. So the boy lifted up his voice and cried aloud. At once the mountain echoed back the greeting. Surprised, the child called out, 'Who are you?' And the mountain answered, 'Who are you?' Irritated, Louis Agassiz cried out, 'I don't like you!' Straightway the voice answered, 'I don't like you' The reply was too much. The child's lips began to quiver and his eyes filled with tears. 'I think that is a very disagreeable boy!' Then the mother took a part in the controversy. She advised the child to give kind words to the unseen stranger. But when he sent a kindly greeting the stranger echoed the overture of friendship. When the child offered to show his things to his new friend, the mountain echoed, 'I will show you my things.' The boy gave one call, one cry, but the mountain echoed it several times, in voices that grew ever fainter and sweeter. For this is the way of God and nature. Give kindness and kindness is received.[1]

There are loyal hearts, there are spirits brave,
  There are souls that are pure and true,
Then give to the world the best you have
  And the best will come back to you.

Give love, and love to your life will flow
  A strength in your utmost need,
Have faith, and a score of hearts will show
  Their faith in your word and deed.

Give truth, and your gift will be paid in kind
  And honour will honour meet,
And a smile that is sweet will surely find
  A smile that is just as sweet.

For life is the mirror of king and slave,
  'Tis just what we are and do;
Then give to the world the best you have,
  And the best will come back to you.

3. God himself will requite you. 'God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love.' And the greatest and best reward that God gives in this life is to show Himself to us, just as we show ourselves to others. 'With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful, and with the

[1] C. F. Walpole, *The Building of Personality*, 65.

[1] N. D. Hillis.

upright man thou wilt show thyself upright. With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure.' On the other hand, the worst punishment that follows upon perseverance in wrong-doing is that it hides God or distorts the view of Him. 'I feared thee, because thou art an austere man,' said the unprofitable servant in the parable. The worthless and the idle are ever ready to think of God as unjust; they can no longer see or know Him as He is. 'With the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward.'

¶ I remember once reading an article by a successful editor, in which he said: 'Introductions are no use to anyone coming to me. I could not help my own brother if I tried. But if a man has a gift and so cultivates it that he makes himself necessary to my profession, I cannot help helping him.' This is true of life. If we give ourselves heartily to making the most of our lives by faith, and effort, and prayer; if we labour at them every day God cannot help helping us.[1]

Perfected.

Luke vi. 40.—'Every one when he is perfected shall be as his master' (RV).

1. The word that in the Authorized Version is here translated 'perfect,' but in the Revised Version 'perfected,' occurs in other parts of the New Testament with varying shades of meaning, all of which are helpful to the study of this particular phrase. The idea of perfection which it suggests is a very practical one.

(1) In Matt. iv. 21 it is translated 'mending': 'And going on from thence he saw other two brethren . . . in the boat . . . *mending* their nets.' The nets were rent with their recent usage, and must be repaired before any more fishing could be successfully undertaken; and so the brothers, like wise men, were attending to the weakened and rent places, and thus preparing for the morrow's strain. Our spiritual life often needs 'mending.'

(2) 'Restore' is the rendering of the word in Gal. vi. 1. The idea here seems to be that the brother 'overtaken in a trespass' has gone astray through his own fault. 'Even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye which are spiritual *restore* such a one in a spirit of meekness; looking to thyself lest thou also be tempted.' How often is this supposition fulfilled to-day, and the child of God is sorrowfully conscious that by some trespass in thought or deed he has slipped away from God! Peter says in his First Epistle (v. 10) that to God Himself belongs the work of restoring such an erring soul. The Apostle Paul (Gal. vi. 1) calls upon the Christian brother to perform it. Both, surely, are right. None but God can make of the faithless believer the steadfast follower, yet in carrying out the gracious work He draws largely upon human agency, and it is one of the highest privileges of him that is spiritual to assist in the beneficent task.

(3) In Heb. xi. 3 the word is interpreted 'framed,' meaning 'built up,' 'symmetrically fashioned together,' and conveys the idea of completeness in every detail. Symmetrical perfection is the end which every true child of God longs to reach: to find in his own character every detail perfect, perfectly arranged, and so forming a perfect whole.

(4) Once more, we find our word in 1 Cor. i. 10, and this time it carries the meaning of unity. In those days, as to-day, the Church was 'by schisms rent asunder, by heresies distressed'; and the Apostle exhorts the Corinthians, 'Now I beseech you, brethren . . . that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be *perfected* (AV, 'perfectly joined') *together* in the same mind and in the same judgment.'

2. This, then, was Christ's purpose in training His disciples—that they should be 'perfected' as He Himself, their Master, was perfect. How did He set about it?

(1) First He set before His disciples a high aim—He caused them to realize the greatness of their calling. In all moral and spiritual training the important thing at starting is, to fill the learner with a sense of the grandeur of his vocation, to implant in him lofty aspirations, to awaken his enthusiasm, and to call forth his energies. The learning of the steps to be taken, and of the difficulties to be faced, will come later. At present what is essential is the dawning hope, the youthful earnestness. And so when almost at the beginning of His ministry Christ said to His disciples, 'Ye are the salt of the earth,' 'Ye are the light of the world,' when He described them as 'a city set

[1] F. A. Russell.

on a hill,' He of course did not mean that His disciples were in fact any of these things; He meant rather that this was what they were called to be, and what it was their duty to aim at being. That, then, was the first stage in the education of Christ's disciples—the placing before them of something worth living and, if need be, worth dying for.

¶ For fourteen years, once a month, Mr. Barnett gathered the little group [his communicants] together and spoke to them of humanity's deepest needs and highest hopes, and because, in the greatness of his ideals for all men, he used fathom-lines where yard-measures would suffice, or pointed out the stars to those who only wished to see fire-balloons, at least he followed His Master's example, who gave the law-ridden world the spiritual precepts of the Sermon on the Mount.[1]

(2) And then we come to the second stage in Christ's education of His disciples, namely, His sympathy with them in their successes. 'I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes.' Now, these words were, no doubt, as St. Luke tells us, occasioned by the progress which the disciples were then making and by the results which they had achieved. Yet we may be sure that the disciples were not anything, and had not done anything, such as in strict justice deserved the praise and thanksgiving which are expressed in Christ's words. He is looking with love on their first efforts, cheering and encouraging them to make more efforts, indicating that the spirit in which those efforts are undertaken is the spirit to which the Father reveals Himself.

Here then we see the second principle of Christ's education: not merely the pointing them to a high aim as in the first case, but the encouragement of their incipient efforts, the sympathetic look, the hearty recognition, the expectation of greater things to come, and the thanksgiving offered up to the Father on that account.

Because of Thy strong faith, I kept the track
Whose sharp-set stones my strength had well-nigh spent;
I could not meet Thy eyes if I turned back;
So on I went.

Because Thou wouldst not yield belief in me,
The threatening crags that rose my way to bar
I conquered inch by crumbling inch—to see
The goal afar.

And though I struggle toward it through hard years,
Or flinch, or falter blindly, yet within,
'You can,' unwavering my spirit hears:
And I shall win.

(3) Lastly, we come to the third stage in Christ's education of His disciples, namely, His sympathy with them in their failures, His mode of dealing with them in the moments of their weakness and falling away, as when He gently rebuked the two disciples who wished to call down fire from Heaven on those who would not receive Him, or as when He shamed those who asked for places on His right hand in His Kingdom, or as when He foresaw the denial of Peter, or as when He sorrowfully asked His disciples in the Garden, 'What! could ye not watch with me one hour?' It is clear that, as the weakness of the disciples increased, His sympathy with them increased in like manner. There is no more talk now of the high aims with which He inspired them at starting, no more congratulation on account of their achievements, no more offering up of thanks on account of their successes. But in place of all this, there is deep, human-hearted sympathy with each one of them, as each is discovered to be a stumbler, a blunderer, or worse still, a coward, a liar, or a traitor.

Christ's training of His disciples, then, has for its object to convince them of their weakness and utter helplessness. If the disciple is perfect as His Master, that is, perfectly instructed according to His Master's teaching, he will confess that he has failed, and that this constitutes his only real hope of success.

Christ did not demand perfection from His disciples all at once, for He knew that even the best of them were only God's growing children; but He did demand a tremendous sincerity of motive and aim. John Milton wrote in the *Apology for Smectymnus:* 'I was confirmed in this opinion that he who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things must himself be a true poem.' We get the essence of our Lord's meaning in these counsels

[1] *Canon Barnett*, i. 111.

if we paraphrase Milton's words, and say that he who would preach well must himself—in intention and desire at least—be a true sermon. And when office and character go together, then we get the ideal messenger of Cowper's poem:

There stands the messenger of truth: there stands
The legate of the skies!—His theme divine,
His office sacred, his credentials clear.
By him the violated law speaks out
Its thunders: and by him, in strains as sweet
As angels use, the Gospel whispers peace.
He stablishes the strong, restores the weak,
Reclaims the wanderer, binds the broken heart,
And, *arm'd himself in panoply complete*
Of heav'nly temper, furnishes with arms,
Bright as his own, and trains by ev'ry rule
Of holy discipline, to glorious war,
The sacramental host of God's elect!

It is a great responsibility to be Christ's messenger, and no man called to that service can set down the ideals of it without writing his own condemnation. Yet he knows that he serves a Master who is as patient and generous as He is holy, and he prays Augustine's prayer, 'Give what Thou commandest and then—command what Thou wilt!'

¶ The disciple is not above his master, neither is the servant above his lord, *nevertheless every one that is perfect shall be as his master.* Oh, blessed saying! Oh, promise like unto that made to the two chosen disciples, 'Ye shall indeed drink of my cup'; and what if our Lord's cup should prove to be the cup of vinegar mingled with gall, it is none the less the cup of blessing and of full unreserved communion. 'Kiss me with the kisses of thy mouth, for thy love is better than wine.'[1]

Casting out the Beam.

Luke vi. 42—'Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote that is in thy brother's eye' (RV).

Some years ago a tiny leaf of a papyrus-book was discovered, with hundreds of other documents, in the rubbish mounds of a little Arab village called Bêhnesa, by the banks of the Bahr Yûsuf, on the edge of the Libyan Desert, one hundred and twenty miles south of Cairo. More than a thousand years ago some authorities of the town called Oxyrhynchus, which stood there, ordered all the town archives, or town law-court, or town library, to be destroyed. Slaves bore out to the burning basket after basket full of papyri, and set light to the heap; but the fire consumed only the outside of the heap, and the sands blew up and covered and preserved the core. So when two young Oxford men dug into the sand, they were able to bear away to their tents these, to us, precious documents, in the very baskets which had been used to take them to the burning. One little leaf among the thousands saved contains in all, on its front and obverse, forty-two short lines of ancient Greek characters. These have been translated, and prove to be eight sayings of Jesus, six of which are decipherable. The first is mutilated; all that remains to us is, 'And then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.' It tallies exactly with this text in St. Luke's Gospel. We who have no earlier Gospel MSS. than the beginning of the fifth century must be thankful to see how little changed in the centuries of early Christian exhortation the text had become. How clear above the sands of Egypt rang, for those two hundred years, the voice of Him who came to unmask all sham religion, and from whose lips of truth went forth the sharp sword of denunciation against all unreality and pretence of soul, with His 'Woe on you hypocrites!' 'Thou hypocrite, cast first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.'

Jesus Christ was addressing His disciples. The moral and fundamental regulations of the spiritual kingdom which was to be founded by them needed insisting on; the lever for good in that new kingdom should be love. The hand that should work the lever was to be sincerity. It was asserted that if the work of the disciples was to stand, it should be what it professed to be. There could be no play-acting in the gospel kingdom. Play-actors, or, as we translate the word, *hypocrites,* had better leave the stage at once. A man would be able to bring forth good in that kingdom only out of an honest and good heart; and just as surely as a wild olive bears wild and bitter berries, or a thorn tree brings forth only thorn-tree fruit, so surely the insincere heart in the field

[1] Dora Greenwell, *The Patience of Hope*, 14.

of Christ's gospel would bring forth bitterness, food useless for the souls of men; and the pretender would multiply falsity and sham-spiritual life amongst his hearers.

Among those who heard Jesus speak that day was Judas, the man of Kerioth; but there stood by His side the impetuous Peter, and the tender-hearted John. Jesus Christ spoke to all of them. For all was the warning necessary, that he who would teach the new way—the way of Christ that leads unto the Father—should himself be quite clear in his mind and clear in his vision, see clearly all it involved and all it demanded of personal purity and personal self-sacrifice, if he would follow the Christ, and be a lantern in a dark day to all that came after. It is one of those side-lights upon the marvellous sincerity of Him who is the Saviour of all sincere men, that He should even hint at hypocrisy or playing at gospel teaching to that band of apparently enthusiastic and devoted disciples; that He should have suggested it was at all possible that any one of them would ever call Him 'Lord, Lord,' and yet do not the things that He said. But here in the sixth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel it is plainly written for our learning that Jesus did warn His first hearers against what, five hundred and fifty years after, His humble servant, our own St. Kentigern, called the *moth of religion, hypocrisy*.

At first sight it does not seem plain why this warning should have been necessary; or why this parabolic teaching should have been so natural, so fitting. We are not so anxious nowadays to get men to be eye-doctors one to the other as to necessitate plain rules for right conduct in casting out motes from the eyes of the brethren. But we have to remember that the curse of blindness lay heavy upon the people among whom Jesus walked in Jewry. Ophthalmia and the dust of an Eastern village doubtless wrought then, as it does now, a plague among the people; and one of the commonest sights in the streets of Capernaum, or by the wayside, would be blind men being led by their children to the market-place, or sitting and asking an alms. 'Can the blind lead the blind?' was a very natural saying for Him who was the Light of the world, if He wished to illustrate the need of clear sight in those who would be guides to people walking in darkness. What Christ seems to assert is, that it is only the man who himself sees clear who can help his brother to clearer vision; while at the same time He hints in this Scripture that if the guide begins to talk about, or think about, or judge of his brother's views, as being right, it is almost morally certain that from that hour he will cease to be an adequate guide.

Now the gospel narrative comes with great warning to the churches or churchmen who first arrogate to themselves in virtue of their office a superior power of vision, and then forget that their own chance of guiding men into all truth is the being filled with the spirit of truth, and enlightened with the light of God the Enlightener, unto all sincerity of life, and purity, and power of self-sacrifice. The gospel narrative, reinforced by the voice from the dumb sands of Egypt, urges us to believe that if any of us who see the vision of Divine life as revealed in God the Son, or the vision of Divine truth, as revealed by God the Holy Ghost, would have men share its light, and life, we must keep our eyes clear to behold it day by day ourselves. More and more we must have hearts sincere to acknowledge that our brother, whom we are tempted to look on as blind, has just the same power as we have to behold and to follow the Light of the world.

¶ Any vice that it may seem to thee to recognize in others, do thou ascribe at once to them and to thyself, using ever a true humility. If that vice really exists in any such person, he will correct himself better, seeing himself so gently understood, and will say that to thee which thou wouldest have said to him. And thou wilt be safe, and wilt close the way to the devil, who will be unable to deceive us or to hinder the perfection of thy soul. Know that we ought not to trust in any appearances, but to put them behind our backs, and abide only in the perception and knowledge of ourselves. . . . I beg thee, then, thee and me and every servant of God, that we apply us to knowing ourselves perfectly, that we may more perfectly know the goodness of God; so that, illumined, we may abandon judging our neighbour, and adopt true compassion, hungering to proclaim virtues and reprove sin in both ourselves and them.[1]

[1] *Letters of Saint Catherine of Siena*, 68.

Conviction and Conduct.

Luke vi. 44.—'Of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes.'

From these words there can be no appeal. They set forth one of the clearest and simplest laws of Nature; you cannot get out that which is not in. And from this it follows that the nature of that which is within will determine the character of whatever is expressed. It is but a re-statement of the shrewd old Hebrew proverb which declares that as a man thinketh, so he is. Our thought world is our real world. As we conceive, so we act. We live as we judge. Our outer active life is the expression of the formative convictions and affections within.

Christ comes on business; vital issues are at stake. Make-believe is not the staple of existence, and the religion which is not a matter of life and death, in which no Divine urgency surges up, charging the heart with the full rush of conviction, which amounts to little more than a pose or an entertainment (emotional or intellectual), a part to be taken up and dropped at leisure as mood or fashion alters, might be called by any other name. So Christ warns His hearers that their listening to Him will avail them nothing unless His teaching revolutionizes their thought. Conviction colours the whole inward life; to that inward life conduct is the general index.

Here are two distinct but vitally related lessons for our thought.

1. *Character is rooted in and determined by conviction.* That is the first. That constitutional characteristics exercise a powerful influence in determining a man's views of things in general cannot be denied; but it is equally true that a man's views very powerfully affect his character and manner of life. Whatever a man really thinks and believes, whatever theory of the world he finds himself constrained to accept, whatever his opinion of his fellow-men, whatever interpretation he gives to human life, whatever type of character secures his sanction and admiration, whatever may be his ultimate hope or fear—these inevitably fashion his character and colour his conduct from day to day. What we think shapes all we do. What we believe is of the utmost consequence to us. To teach the contrary is to divest thought and conviction of all reality and serious significance. Organization conditions physical life, yet that life precedes organization and fashions it. In like manner our ideals and beliefs may be modified by temperament and circumstance; yet imagination, faith, conscience come first and constitute the cardinal factors in human character. Thus the chief point of emphasis in the statement of the gospel is belief. Belief holds the citadel of life. The morality of the mass of the people, at all events, has been bound up with their religious belief.

Take an illustration which Goldwin Smith has used with fine effect. There are two miners, say, by themselves, and far from human eye in the wilds of the Far West: one has found a rich nugget, the other has toiled and found nothing. What hinders the man who has found nothing, if he is the stronger or the better armed, from slaying his mate as he would a buffalo and taking the gold? Surely, in part at least, the feeling drawn from the Christian society in which he spent his youth, by which his earliest beliefs were developed and the conviction fashioned that what is not seen by man is most assuredly seen by God. Is this too imaginative a situation? Who can doubt that the convictions which Christian society has fashioned and sustained have been—hitherto, at all events—the guarantee of virtue? That they have formed characters at once of great force and great beneficence? That they have sustained philanthropy and social progress? Who can doubt that the majority of good and noble works done have sprung from love to God and from love of man inspired by belief in our common relations to God? Who can doubt that heroes and reformers have been led to face peril, to risk life in the service of their fellows, by the conviction that they were doing the Divine will, and that while they were doing it they would be in the Divine keeping?

2. Still, the emphasis lies on character. *Character is the test of discipleship.* That is the second lesson. The second is needed as the qualification of the first. We may speak very indefinitely about definite belief. 'Belief' has come to pass in common speech as the synonym of 'opinion.' That is a loose and irregular use of words which is full of

mischief. When Christ stated the self-evident truth of the text, it was to throw the emphasis upon character as the supreme test of the Christian life. This is the basis upon which He builds His Kingdom; and by character we must be judged. It is a searching test. It is the most reasonable test. We ourselves judge one another, those whom we like, and those whom we dislike, those whom we feel we can trust, and those whom we feel we cannot trust, not by their words, but by their life. 'Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?'

The Christian gospel demands conduct as the measure of faith, and the degrees of blessedness in the Christian life are all degrees of character; not ornaments to be worn without, but harmonies to be realized within. A Christian acts only in obedience to the Divine life active within him; his conduct is spontaneous: it is that Divine life active within bursting into appropriate act.

For Christ has other words for other worlds,
But for this world the word of God is Christ.
And when we come to die we shall not find
The day has been too long for any of us
To have fulfilled the perfect law of Christ.

Were Christ a thousand times reborn of Mary,
And not in thee, then thou art lost for ever.
His cross on Calvary can never save thee,
Till in thine own heart is the cross uplifted.
Nor art thou profited that Christ is risen,
If deep entombed in death and sin thou liest.

Behold! the Eternal word this day incarnate!
Where? In thy heart, when thine own life
thou losest.
God's true and only Son was Christ; I tell thee
That every child of man must be Christ also!

The Fountains of Speech.

Luke vi. 45.—'Out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.'

That is to say, a man's speech can be traced to inner fountains. Our conversation is a current which flows from secret springs. In the depths of our being there is a certain 'abundance,' and our words are the expression of this abundance, whether they are uttered in the fullness of eager purpose or in the languid drip of idle conversation. Our speech has, therefore, large relationships. Just as the little stream which flows through the village green was born in the hidden fastnesses of the everlasting hills, so our speech has its birthplace in the hidden wealth of the heart, and it takes its quality and its colour from its native place. Analyse the streamlet which flows through the valley, and you may learn something about the heart of the hills. The iron will tell its story. The sulphur will tell its story. The chalky deposits will tell their story. The peat will tell its story. The things in solution will bear their witness to the solids in which they were born. Out of the abundance of its heart the river speaketh! Test the spontaneous speech of a man, and you will know the character of his heart. Our speech is verily the overflowing of the heart; speech is the heart in the act and process of expression.

Now these secret reservoirs hidden away in the heart can be of many kinds.

1. There are, for instance, reservoirs of *uncleanness*. Unclean thought has poured its contribution into life's vital cistern. Unclean feeling and desire bring their tribute. Every unclean act of will enlarges the contents. Indeed, every movement in our life is reactive, and the reactive influence is a flowing backward into the central waters of our being, thereby appreciably raising their level. If any movement is a profane or unclean movement the backward flow is correspondingly impure. And so we create our own central 'abundance,' and if this be unclean it will assuredly issue in 'filthy communications,' in foul deceit and falsehood. 'Out of the uncleanness of his heart a man speaketh.'

2. Then there are reservoirs of *bitterness*. They are like the wells at Marah. Somehow or other the life is sour within. The milk of human kindness is no longer sweet. Everything is touched with acid, and cynicism reigns. It is very amazing how swiftly this souring transition can take place. 'Thunder is about,' and the milk turns sour. Sometimes a storm breaks in a life, and in a very little while a genial man has become a cynic. Disappointment sometimes touches sweet waters, and they become suddenly bitter. But of all embittering ministers there is nothing to compare with sin. In Tennyson's 'Vision of Sin' it is an abandonment to the allurements of the flesh, a sensational round of garish dis-

obedience, that eventually turns everything sour, and the once charming young life directs a cynical gaze upon everything. 'Ephraim is turned to idols . . . her drink is sour.' Yes, we shall not be misinterpreting this word if we insert a connecting link, and read it again in this wise: 'Ephraim is turned to idols, and *therefore* her drink is sour.' Every essentially sweet thing began to taste sour, for she herself was soured by her sin. If we turn bitter, no matter what may be the cause, our speech can never be sweet. Our words will absorb some of the bitterness of the heart in which they were born, and they will go abroad to embitter the common life of men. 'Out of the bitterness of his heart a man speaketh.'

3. And then, again, there are central waters of *insipidity*. The inner life is flat and stale. There is no 'taste' about it. There is no effervescence, no sparkle, no vitality. It is like wine which has lost its virtue, a poor, sad thing which is heavy to him that gives and to him that takes! Now, when life has become insipid its speech cannot abound in flavour. If a man's life is flat his words can never inspire. If there is deadness within there cannot be vitality without. You cannot have the Dead Sea within, and not have Dead Sea fruit without. Out of the abundance of its deadness the mouth speaketh! The speech will savour of the grave. And how far away is it from this: 'The words that I speak unto you, they are life.'

In the light of all this it becomes very clear how the character of our speech is to be changed. How shall we give virtue to it, and strength, and sweetness, and grace? By changing the character of the fountain. If it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaketh we must begin the transformation by changing the abundance. And who can deal with the abundance? Who can transform it? None but Christ Jesus, our Saviour. In many different ways He proclaims this ministry, and He offers Himself to do it. 'Make the tree good, and the fruit will be good.' 'Except a man be born again he cannot . . .' This is the basal work. 'The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water,' alive and leaping, 'springing up into everlasting life.'

¶ The man who lives in his religious centre of personal energy, and is actuated by spiritual enthusiasms, differs from his previous carnal self in perfectly definite ways. The new ardor which burns in his breast consumes in its glow the lower 'noes' which formerly beset him, and keeps him immune against infection from the entire grovelling portion of his nature. Magnanimities once impossible are now easy; paltry conventionalities and mean incentives once tyrannical hold no sway. The stone wall inside of him has fallen, the hardness in his heart has broken down.[1]

¶ Let one or two young folks in town break with heathendom and at once these aged monitors demand from them a Christianity in best apple-pie order. But when they do own up to the conversion of a neighbour, the breezy ring of their frankness is refreshing. This time he gets a parable out of the fact that no native hut has a window, therefore no streak of daybreak can enter his dark hut. It is only the daybreak *sounds* that get in on him to tell what the eye cannot see. This is his picture of a man's hidden heart and its conversion, this the simile that seems to invite elaboration. 'Yes,' said an old sapient, singling out one of them, 'that man *is* saved, and why do I know it? Why do I know it is daybreak without leaving my dark hut to see if there are streaks of dawn? *I know by the singing of the sunrise birds.* Their music gets into the blackness of my house without my bothering to get out and see if the east is reddening. So, too, a Christian and this new heart of his: I cannot get in, past bone and blood, to inspect it, but the new heart comes out in song like the sunrise birds.'[2]

Wise and Foolish Builders.

Luke vi. 46-49.—'And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Every one that cometh unto me, and heareth my words, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: he is like a man building a house, who digged and went deep, and laid a foundation upon the rock; and when a flood arose, the stream brake against that house, and could not shake it: because it had been well builded. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that built a house upon the earth without a foundation; against which the stream brake, and straightway it fell in; and the ruin of that house was great.'

THIS passage offers a very pertinent example of the great advantage which is gained by supplementing the record of one Evangelist by the record of

[1] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 267.

[2] Dan Crawford, *Back to the Long Grass*, 260.

another. We get the full lineaments of the parable or incident by the combined portrayals given by both. If we superimpose Luke's account upon Matthew's the emphasis of the teaching is deepened and enriched. Matthew records that the wise man 'built upon a rock'; Luke adds the intensifying line, 'he digged deep.' Matthew mentions rain and floods and winds; Luke adds the forceful figure of a mountain torrent tearing down its resounding bed. Matthew contents himself with the record that the house 'fell'; Luke adds the verifying addition that it 'immediately' fell. Matthew finishes the parable in the descriptive phrase, 'great was the fall of it'; Luke takes the issue a step further, and we behold the squandered and desolate confusion when the storm has died away; 'the ruin of that house was great.'

Now, when the two records are combined, how stands the teaching? Here is one man building his house upon a foundation of rock, and here is another man setting down his house upon the unprepared surface of the common earth, and it is upon this latter that the teaching of the parable culminates. Says the Evangelist Luke, he built his house 'upon the earth'; he put it down anywhere, without any consideration being given to the stability of its base. It is the type of the haphazard life, the life that puts down its concern upon any base, doing anything, anyhow, without insight or foresight. It is the type of the superficial life, planting its buildings upon the surface, seeking to make them imposing rather than sound, concerned only that the structure should be admired, and having no solicitude that it should endure.

In the sphere of religion men are doing this every day. They erect their spiritual houses anywhere, they put them down upon any surface. Because they exercise no foresight about rains and winds and floods they are not concerned about sites and foundations, and in the day of crisis their house is laid in ruin. And all this is in contrast to the man of serious purpose and observing eye, who goes about discreetly prospecting for suitable sites, who takes due and diligent note of possible rains and winds and floods, and who, when he finds likely ground, ruthlessly removes the loose, soft, yielding, undependable surface, and digs deep, until he comes upon abiding rock. And there he builds his house, and the house laughs in the day of storm and flood, and it throws aside the tempest as though it were only the scattered spray of a playful sea.

Here, then, we have two builders described by our Lord. One was superficial and the other was profound. Wherein consists the difference? It is not that in the sphere of religion the one was a mere hearer, and the other combined the hearer and the doer. We miss the very point of the parable if we draw a sharp, straight, dividing line, and put the doers on the right side and the hearers on the left. In this parable both the wise and the foolish were doers. They both built their houses, but the difference consisted in the houses that were built. They were both doers; it is in the depth and quality of the doing that the tremendous contrast is found. One was a superficial doer, the other man's doing was profound. And this contrast runs throughout the entire teaching of the Sermon on the Mount. There appears to be a line of cleavage from end to end of it, separating the doer whose doings are upon the surface from the doer whose doings are in the depths.

1. Some lives are altogether shallow; they are animal, their chief joy being in the senses; they are childish, being wholly occupied with trifles; they are without one serious thought, feeling, or purpose. We might think it next to impossible to live such a life. To begin with, this is a thought-provoking world. To look upon the globe we inherit and the sky of glory which enfolds us, to ponder our mysterious existence, to confront the problem of the why and wherefore, to look before and after, would, one might suppose, render habitual levity of thought impossible. Our situation also is thought-provoking in the extreme, human life being full of occurrences and experiences, of joys and sorrows, which, it would seem, must move the soul to its depths. Yet, despite these powerful provocations, many refuse to entertain a large or serious thought; they skim the surface, and their shallow-mindedness and little-mindedness are seen and felt in everything they are and do. Mark their pleasures; they are simply wild on athletic and gymnastic exhibitions, pastimes and holidays, horse-racing, all kinds of sports, conjuring tricks, theatrical scenes and stars, dancing and shows. There is no reason

why we should take our pleasures sadly; but a measure of seriousness is the salt of pleasure, and our amusements are contemptible and insipid if there is not in them a spice of intelligence and higher purpose. Dress is the absorbing passion of crowds. They think of nothing, talk of nothing, and live for nothing else. When we remember the vital part that coloration and ornament play in the animal world, we may well believe that fashion has also a part to play in the evolution of human society; but that the powder on our wings should constitute the absorbing passion of life is absurd. Popular literature reveals the extreme frivolousness of multitudes; it is pitiful to think of the time lost over silly pages. Absolutely oblivious of the rare jewels of deeper seas, thousands of readers fritter away the golden hours sporting with the ephemera on the surface of the shallowest, muddiest wayside pool. Again, think of the superficiality of mind displayed in common conversation. The current talk is empty gossip without a gleam of intelligence or earnestness, lightest chaff which the wind drives away. Judging by the vain chatter we might suppose that there was not a serious thing in the world. The active wickedness of men is sufficiently terrible; but is it less trying to contemplate the emptiness, carelessness, and purposelessness of the lives of multitudes?

¶ Folly, not vice, is the enemy. Our curse is not original sin but aboriginal stupidity. It is human to err, inhuman to practise iniquity. We blunder rather than sin. Few men set out to reach hell, but most of us are for ever losing our way to heaven.

Folly, as an aberration, is laughable; as a fashion, as a rule of life, it is disastrous.[1]

¶ Frivolity is always found where men's love of enjoyment is in excess of their moral interests. It is the danger of those whose means of indulgence are unrestrained by the sense of responsibility, and who have found no worthy purpose for their energies. The frivolous trifle life away as if it were a vain freak of chance or an unsubstantial dream. They not only lose hold of moral truth themselves, but inevitably they end in regarding all their companions as equally senseless to higher things. This is the cause of their degradation, their startling moral perversity, their selfish obtuseness to the needs of others, and their bewildering perversion of all the standards of morality. Frivolity ends in moral death.[1]

2. Again, many who consider themselves serious and deep-souled are not really so. There is an iron pillar at Delhi, a very ancient column, which was believed by the Hindus to have its roots in the centre of the earth, but when the European took to digging about it he found the foundation only twenty inches below the surface.

(1) There is an *intellectual* life which pierces the surface without sounding the depths. Scholars, full of intellectual power and penetration, who never find God in the visible universe are of this order. One might think that the scientist who fathoms the depths of ocean, or the star-depths of heaven, has gone deep; yet, in truth, with all his parade of dredges, telescopes, and spectroscopes, he has gone but twenty inches below the surface who misses the Almighty Spirit, of whom are all things, by whom are all things, and to whom are all things. Entirely superficial is that view of the universe which does not reach God! 'Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.' Here is the only worthy view of Nature. It is the Divine creation; the immanence of God is its unity and life. An undevout science is superficial, built on the sand because it knows nothing but sand. Jesus Christ saw that the lily has its roots in eternity, and that its splendour is the reflection of the glory of God; and the grandest science is shallow until it finds Him who laid the foundations of the earth and reared the pillars of the sky.

(2) There is a *moral* life which, going below the surface, fails to reach the depths. The morality which finds its origin, reasons, sanctions, inspirations, and compensations altogether within the sphere of human society and temporal interests is rooted in the sand, whatever may be its eloquence and plausibility. There is an eternal truth, justice, and love; and laws of conduct not based

[1] *The Glass of Fashion*, 11.

[1] *Life's True Values*, 123.

on this eternal righteousness, whatever profundity or authority they may affect, are grounded in the dust. Many ethical students are dissatisfied with the place and treatment of morals in the New Testament. They maintain that it is not distinguished by any marked moral originality, that the discussion of the virtues by Christ and the Apostles is less full and definite than what is found in Plato and Aristotle, Epictetus and Seneca; that the sacred writers propound no ethical system, nor do they figure out and analyse in any exhaustive way the various excellences which go to the formation of great and perfect character. The reply to these criticisms is that the New Testament concerns itself chiefly with the root of righteousness and the planting of that root in its native soil of eternity. The special aim of Jesus Christ was, first, to impress upon the world the fact that righteousness must have a root. This teaching was loudly called for in Christ's day, and it is not less needful now. The wisdom of this world will persist in teaching that righteousness is a superficial and arbitrary plant, reared and perfected from without by policy and philosophy—that it is purely a matter of convention, utility, and taste. No error could be more fatal. In the conservatory we find singular orchids which have no root whatsoever. Attaching themselves to a piece of wood hung on the wall they continue to grow and bloom without soil or sprinkling, curious freaks that they are. But in the vinery where the great clusters hang, and in the orchards where precious fruits ripen, we find roots enough, to which the closest attention is paid. Pretty bits of fancy bloom manage to exist without roots, not the fruit-bearers which are the glory of the garden. It is the first great doctrine of revelation that a rich, fruit-bearing life must have depth of earth, that it must pierce to the vital soil of the spiritual universe, that in faith and love it must take hold of God. And having impressed upon our mind this fundamental truth, revelation next insists that the state of the root is the main matter. The old husbandman held an exaggerated notion of the value of pruning, and gave his chief attention to the branches of the tree; modern horticultural science, however, teaches a different doctrine, holding that the tree must rather be treated at its roots. As the modern horticulturist has seen that the chief question is that trees must be fairly planted in a right soil and their roots duly enriched, so the New Testament maintains the same truth in character.

¶ Peterborough Cathedral went deep, but its builders stopped some inches short of the rock, and the tower fell; many a proud tower, both national and individual, has sunk because its moral basis did not reach the eternal rock.[1]

(3) There is a *religious* life that sinks below the surface without sounding the depths. A religious life of almost any kind is in some sense below the surface, yet it may be fatally shallow. The Pharisees failed here—they thought that the sacred column to which they trusted went down to the centre, but Christ showed that it was only twenty inches in the sand. His words in the text may be regarded as specially addressed to them. They had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. Winstanley at great labour and expense built on the Eddystone rocks his ill-fated lighthouse. It was in many respects a noble tower, the fruit of many sacrifices, but its architect gave too much attention to its adornment, and too little to its severity of outline and establishment in the rock. He ornamented it as if it had been a summer-house, added fantastic projections, and made it altogether a picturesque object in the midst of the seas. Yet, notwithstanding that its builder was satisfied with its architectural features and convinced of its strength, when the terrible storm arose it swept away every vestige of the tower, and Winstanley and the keepers perished in the deep. Was it not much the same with the ecclesiastical fabric of the Judaism with which our Lord came into contact? There the fatal neglect was that of spiritual reality. The sacred system was elaborate and picturesque, it seemed part of the impregnable rock, it shed a Divine illumination over wild seas, and its votaries regarded it with proud satisfaction and absolute confidence. But all the while it was not 'tenoned and mortised' on the indestructible foundation. As our Lord showed to scribe and priest, they sought the honour that came from men and not the honour that comes from God; they drew nigh to Him with their lips, whilst their heart was far from Him; they respected the letter of the law whilst ignoring its spirit; their almsgiving was full of hypocrisy;

[1] W. L. Watkinson.

they were proud of their own selfish righteousness, and ignored that Divine righteousness which expresses itself in justice and mercy, humility and purity. Despite all appearances to the contrary, their ecclesiasticism was not based on spiritual truth, sympathy, and obedience; it did not follow the stern lines of true godliness, and when the black storm broke their house fell, and great was the fall of it. Mere ecclesiasticism and denominationalism are scratches in the sand. We find the depths in religion only when we worship God in spirit and in truth. Nothing in our religious faith, worship, and action will stand, except as it springs out of the heartfelt love and fear of God as He is made known to us in Jesus Christ our Lord. He is the Church's one and only foundation.

3. There is an eternal Being, an eternal world, an eternal righteousness, an eternal life, and he, and he only, digs deep who gets down to these central realities. In our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ alone do we find this rock. The unknown God is revealed in Him. Here is the Rock of Ages. The stone which the builders rejected has become the headstone of the corner. Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ.

(1) Only as we build here do we find *true satisfaction*. A deeper life means, in the first instance at least, a sense of strife and seriousness to which the superficial are strangers; deep thinking, feeling, and living preclude surface joy. 'Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord.' All deep-souled men have been down there, and voiced that bitter cry. They descended into the depths of their own heart, and beheld its weakness and wickedness; they descended into the depths of the world, and saw its hollowness and mockery; and in despair they descended into the depths of the grave, and cried out from its darkness. But out of these depths breaks forth the sunshine and the music. We never find the light of life and the peace that passeth understanding until they surprise us in the depths of self-despair. God's people are ever ready to confess, 'Thank God that I died, for in dying I found life; that I mourned, for I have been comforted; that I felt the horror of a great darknesss, for thus the marvellous light broke in upon me; that I sank low, for so I mounted high; that my poor, shallow, childish life was shattered, for now He has given me gold tried in the fire, and opened my eyes to visions of the glory of His goodness and promise.'

¶ A distinguished traveller notes the curious fact that an earthquake occurred in California on the surface of the earth whilst the silver-miners working beneath knew nothing of it; and when our life is hid with Christ in God we are delightfully oblivious of earth tremors and surface disasters which sorely trouble worldly men. Many of us never know real satisfaction of life because, at best, we dip below the surface only. Let us face the facts, however unwelcome they may be, and get down to the everlasting truths for the reason, the conscience, and the affections which are made known in Jesus Christ, and through sorrow we shall find joy, through poverty inherit the true riches, through humiliation ascend the seat of honour, and through death attain incorruption and eternal life. This is God's wonderful way of disclosing the great secret.[1]

(2) Only as we build here do we find *fullness and stability of character*. The Pharisee was absorbed with the surface and circumference of character, whilst our Lord ever insisted on its beginnings and springs, because only thus are strength and completeness attainable. In the garden and orchard we all know the difference between the fullness of life which declares itself in amplitude, richness, and bloom, and the scantness of life betrayed in meagreness and sickliness; and it is still more easy to distinguish between character full of rich and generous inspiration and character feebly struggling to maintain itself. The trees of the Lord full of sap are not to be confounded with the things ready to die. And the spiritual life and character of many lack steadiness and constancy. There are fitfulness of mood and instability of purpose, fluctuations of faith, and experience, perplexing alternations of fruitful and sterile seasons in character and conduct. The explanation of all this is found in superficiality of soul; we do not bear fruit upward because we do not take root downward. 'Abide in me and I in you,' said Christ. This direction is repeated again and again. Secular and philosophical morality know nothing of any such mys-

[1] W. L. Watkinson.

ticism, they despise it; but He who knew most of righteousness knew that it was at best only partial or sporadic except as it was, through faith and love, fellowship and obedience, rooted in Himself. Are not many of us specially and greatly lacking here? In solitude, meditation, and prayer we need to deepen our spiritual life. More reflection on the deep things of God, more whole-hearted love, more of the prayer that comes from the depths of the heart, more of the life hid with Christ in God, and our whole character would break into fullness of beauty.

If in my heart's most secret shrine
My Lord abide,
Then all those human loves of mine
Whom there I hide
Shall feel His virtue flow to them
Since there they touch His garment's hem.[1]

(3) Only as we live this deeper life is *our joy assured for ever.* The teaching of our Lord in this parable is, that whatever in character, satisfaction, and hope is not based on the deepest life, life in Himself, must be overthrown. In connexion with the principal palace at Babylon was a remarkable construction, one of the wonders of the world, known to the Greeks as 'the hanging garden.' Several tiers of arches formed an artificial imitation of a mountain, and on the top of this structure was a mass of earth on which grew flowers, shrubs, and trees. Where are these artificial elevations now? Gone long ago, shaken to the earth, buried in the ditch. All around us we see the glory, the joy, and the hope of men resting like the 'hanging gardens' of Babylon on an artificial basis, and any slight accident—a sickness, a loss, a death, any one of a thousand changes—wrecks the treasure and pride of life. But the natural gardens of the earth, those which rest on the granite pillars of the deep underworld, bloom to-day as they did in the primitive ages—the grass as green, the flowers as sweet, the blossoms as gay, the forests as grand as in the morning of the ages. Building on Christ we build on the eternal reality, nor shall we suffer shame.

[1] Dorothy F. Gurney, *A Little Book of Quiet*, 12.

Three Estimates.

Luke vii. 2.—'A certain centurion.'

In the story of the healing of the servant of the centurion, which is recorded in the Gospel of Luke, chap. vii. 1-10, we find three estimates of the character of the centurion. First of all, we have the estimate of his neighbours and friends and the elders and officials of the Jewish people; then we have the judgment of the man himself on himself; and then we have the judgment of Jesus on his character and action.

1. First of all, we have the judgment of the man's neighbours and friends and the elders and officials of the Jews, who carried his request to Jesus, and who, when they made that request to Him, said 'That he was worthy for whom he should do this. For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.' It is well for us to remember sometimes that there is a general judgment formed by our neighbours and our friends regarding each one of us. In this case we have the estimate of a circle of people who knew this centurion well; and in order to estimate the value of their opinion, we must remember the circumstances and the type of man about whom the opinion was expressed. Remember that he lived among these Jews as an alien. We know to-day something of the unpleasantness that associates itself with the position of an alien in certain circumstances in certain countries; but this feeling was accentuated in the position of this man among the Jews. He was the representative of the Roman power, the official of a power that they hated and loathed and detested in a very great degree. And naturally their minds were considerably prejudiced against him because of what he was and who he was. Yet, after this man had lived for some time among these people, they came to respect him. And he had made good use of his opportunities to learn something that he did not know, and that he could not have known very well unless he had lived among them. For as he lived among them he came to realize the value of their religion; and not only so, but, passing from that estimate of their religion, he came to surrender his heart to the God of the Jews, the true God. He passed from the worship

of paganism to the worship of Jehovah. Now, these people had the opportunity of seeing this man under normal conditions. They saw him when he was on duty with his soldiers, and they saw him when he was off duty; they saw him in his public capacity, and in his private life; they saw him when he was on his guard, and they saw him when he was off his guard. Therefore they were able to estimate his character. And it says a great deal for him that, when they came to carry his request to Jesus that he should heal his servant that was sick, they prefaced their request with this testimony to the worth of the man. You will notice that they passed their judgment on his religious spirit and on its practical outcome; not simply on what he professed to be, but on what his religion led him to do in life. He had not only come to a knowledge of the true God, but had come to appreciate the close connection between the Jewish religion and the Jewish ideal of nationality, and had proved the reality of his devotion by building a synagogue for the worship of Jehovah. Thus, you will notice, the Jews based their judgment not only on something professed, but on something practised; not merely on something promised, but on something done.

Not words of winning note,
Not thoughts from life remote,
Not fond religious airs,
Not sweetly languid prayers,
Not love of scent and creeds.
Wanted: Deeds.[1]

2. Then we have, in the second place, the man's judgment on himself. These people said to Jesus, 'He is worthy.' But the man himself said to Jesus, 'I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof; wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee.' The man was earnest and sincere, as you can see by the figure and metaphor he used in his speech with Jesus, and by the great fact that he manifested a true and living faith in Him, and by the conception that he had of Christ's dignity and power. Those conceptions would effectually prevent him from dissembling to Jesus. His judgment on himself is only the judgment that one would expect from a man of this calibre. For there is no better sign that a man is really good than that he has a sense of his own unworthiness. It is not the new convert who has the deepest sense of sin, even though that convert come to Christ under the full conviction of sin and in the agony of that conviction. The deepest sense of sin is always felt by the man who has seen most of the perfection, the beauty, the holiness of Christ, because he is most conscious of how far he falls short of that perfect standard. The man who has gazed long at the perfect, spotless purity of Christ and who lives in close communion and fellowship with Him, is the man who is most sensitive to his own imperfections and shortcomings, and says, 'I am not worthy.' What did St. Paul, that great and splendid character, say of himself, as he came near the end of his life? He called himself 'the chief of sinners'!

Thy God was making haste into thy roof,
Thy humble faith and fear keeps him aloof:
He'll be thy guest, because he may not be;
He'll come—into thy house? No, into thee.[1]

3. And then there is the third judgment—the judgment of Jesus on this man. 'When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him.' That is a very remarkable word to be used in connection with Christ; it is used only twice regarding our Lord. Once we are told that He marvelled at the unbelief of His fellow citizens in Nazareth, and now we are told that He marvelled at the faith of this centurion, and said, 'I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.' Now what did Christ mean? In order to understand what Christ meant you must remember the metaphor that the centurion used when he spoke to Jesus, saying that he was not worthy either that the Lord should come under his roof or that he should come personally to Christ. He drew the comparison between himself and Christ as to the authority and power committed unto each of them. Under the strict discipline of the Roman army he had perfect control and authority and power over his soldiers. It was absolute. If he ordered a man to death, then to death he went. If he said to a man, 'Come,' that man had no choice but to come. If he said to another, 'Go,' then he went with alacrity. Now, what he meant

[1] D. Macgregor.

[1] Richard Crashaw.

was that, similarly, Jesus Christ was a Man with authority; that His wish was law. Nay, more, that He had supreme authority and power. Therefore he said to Jesus, 'Speak but the word.' He knew that the word was sufficient. Or by contrast, he himself was under authority; although he had authority over his own soldiers, he was under the authority of the Roman power and the Roman government. And if he who was under authority could do these things, how much more could Jesus do what was asked of Him, He being a man with supreme authority, and none being over Him. Thus you will see that this alien to the Jewish nation and the Jewish people had grasped the truth that even the chosen leaders of Israel had failed to see and apprehend, that the disciples themselves had as yet failed to recognize, namely, that Jesus was the Son of God, that He had Divine power and Divine authority; and, realizing who Jesus was and what His authority was, he put Him in the supreme place as omnipotent. He said that a word from Christ was enough. And so it proved to be.

Now faith of that kind is of no mushroom growth. Nor is it the mere profession of an empty sentiment or emotion. It would be interesting to trace the growth of the faith of this man if only we knew a little more about him. Nevertheless, though we are told nothing of the growth of that faith, we see its magnificent fruit. We only know that he studied the revelation of God in the Old Testament Scriptures, that there he learned to understand the place and dignity of the Messiah, and that by watching and hearing Jesus, as we are perfectly certain he must have done, he had been led step by step to acknowledge Him as not merely Son of Man, but Son of God. And Christ judges him by his faith and pronounces this magnificent commendation of his faith: 'I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.'

Such, then, are the three estimates here given of the character of this one man. They were all true from the point of view of their authors, and that is an enviable person yet in whom such testimonies unite. But the last is the main one after all, carrying within itself all that is valuable in the other two. The real test is, What does the Lord Jesus Christ think of me? For if He approve, it does not much matter what men may say, and if He condemn, the good opinion of my neighbours will not make up for His displeasure. But to secure His approval we must have faith in Him, and how does the case stand with us in regard to that? 'Dost *thou* believe in the Son of God? That is the deciding question; for if we believe in Him we shall think little of self, and the men around us will take knowledge of us that, like Him, we go about doing good. We may have the approbation of Christ, while men regard us with disapproval. But if we regard ourselves with conceit, that is a proof that we have not yet found the true value of Christ, and that He cannot speak well of us. The first and the last of these estimates, namely, those of our neighbours and of our Lord, may for some reason or other be for a time at variance. But the second and third, if we be Christians indeed, never can be dissociated, for satisfaction in Christ implies dissatisfaction with self, and the more we think of Christ and believe in Him, the less will we ever think of self. Let us look into ourselves, therefore, and see which rules within us, self or Christ; and if it be self, let us seek such faith in the Saviour as shall make us entirely one with Him, so that we can say with Paul, 'I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.'

What to us the Passion story, Christ is dying, Christ is dead,
If we are not daily dying in His everlasting stead?
What effects the Crucifixion, if we be not crucified
Man for Godhead, hourly dying, that He may be glorified?
Where the Resurrection value if we do not learn to rise
Daily, hourly, to the freedom that is our supernal prize? [1]

Three Characteristics.

Luke vii. 2.—'A certain centurion.'

It was not the purpose of the writers of the Gospels to describe characters. They told their tale as simply as they could. But their simple

[1] D. H. S. Nicholson, *Poems*, 43.

narratives have a clearness and transparency that make them mirrors, as it were, in which we can see character revealed. So is it with this Roman centurion who besought Jesus to heal his servant. Read the story as it is told by St. Matthew and St. Luke, and you will surely find the portraiture of a man singularly attractive, one who well deserved the praise even of Jesus.

1: First there is his *sympathy*. Sympathy is commonly confined within severe conventional limits. It is often like a lake in a private park, and not like the stream which weds together the private park and the village green. It is often the dialect of the hamlet rather than the speech of a people. It is parochial rather than national, sectarian instead of universal. There are stern, hoary walls within which its movements are enclosed, and beyond the enclosures the music of its influence is never heard. But sometimes the waters rise in a gracious flood; the imprisoning walls are submerged; the boundary marks of the little hamlet are washed out, and class and caste and sect are forgotten in a broad and fruitful union. Here is a man whose sympathies are at the flood, and the obstructing barriers have melted away. Caste and class fall before the impetuous stream.

(1) 'A certain centurion's slave who was dear unto him.' A slave who was dear! A servant who was very precious! Here is one conventional barrier overthrown. Sympathy has paid no heed to social grade, and centurion and servant are one. The servant's ailment is the master's grief. We know how stern and threatening is the barrier which commonly intervenes between class and class, and cleaves society into alienated and unsympathetic divisions. We speak of master *and* man, of mistress *and* servant, but the 'and' too frequently represents no vital conjunction. It is a dead ligature, a kind of doll's arm connection. If it be wrenched there is no pain; if it be bruised there is no bleeding. But here was a conjunction between master and servant made out of living nerves, sensitive sympathies, and the pains and joys of the one thrilled and throbbed into the live mind and heart of the other. Their conjunction was not a mere connection, it was a fellowship; it was not an expedient, it was a life. They were members one of another.

(2) Mark the further advance of the gracious flood. 'He loveth our nation!' What! the Roman loving the Jew? Here is another hoary rampart overthrown. 'He loveth our nation.' Racial limits are overpassed. A citizen of imperial Rome, nurtured in the glowing ambitions of a world-wide dominion, finding room in his sympathies for the undistinguished and unattractive people of the Jews! That is a type of sentiment by no means common and exuberant. Patriotism is usually sternly self-contained and exclusive. Its manifestations, beyond its own boundaries, are too commonly selfish and soured. It is like the juices of many trees, which, when they escape from their own enveloping bark, congeal into stiffness and bitterness. The cup of patriotism rarely flows over into cosmopolitanism. Even we English people can claim no very exuberant love for other nations of the world. Our sympathies run broad and deep among the English-speaking people, and it is well and good; but is it not the case that our exclusiveness is much vaster? And do our sympathies include the Jews? Where is the Jew loved? And, yet, let us remember that in all essential characteristics he was the same in the time of the Master as he is in our own day. If he be repellent now, he was equally repellent then. If he be mean and grasping, if his name has become a synonym for treachery, the dark degeneracy has not occurred in the Christian centuries. He was what he is, and the centurion loved him. Profound sympathy discovered his wealth, discerned the lovely even among the base, sought fellowship with the lovely, and loved it. Roman patriotism did not congeal into Roman pride, but flowed out in discerning sympathy, paying no heed to racial limits, and finding home and sustenance in the universal good.

(3) Can we trace the sympathy into yet finer issues? 'Himself built us our synagogue.' A Roman discerning the beauty in the worship of the Jew! 'Himself built us our synagogue.' Ecclesiastical boundaries overflowed! It is a welcome sign of broadening and enriching vision when we begin to take sympathetic interest in the religious aspirations and worships of others. It is a sure sign of dwarfed and crippled life when religious interests are self-contained and exclusive, when we cannot see the beauties in another mode of worship, or find a single foothold for kinship

and communion. But our sectarian fences are so emphatic and pronounced that it is difficult for our sympathies to get beyond them. Our boundaries are so apt to be made of spiked railings and barbed wire, instead of green and perfumed hedge-rows. When sympathy is refined, kinships are discerned, and even where there is much that is alien, we discover much that is common. Here, then, is the breadth and depth of the centurion's sympathy. In its gracious comprehensiveness social barriers are submerged, and servant and master wedded in vital union; racial limits are submerged, and peoples of varied characteristics united in fruitful fellowship; ecclesiastical boundaries are submerged, and communion established with the wealth of an apparently alien faith. 'His servant was dear unto him.' 'He loveth our nation.' 'Himself built us our synagogue.'

2. We are not surprised to find that a man of such spacious sympathy is also a man of *profound humility*. That is not a mere coincidence, it is an inevitable moral consequence. Sympathy is creative of humility. Large sympathy; deep humility! No sympathy; colossal self-conceit! Sympathy means association, vision, comprehension, outlook. Large sympathy implies large spaciousness and far-reaching outlook. Absence of sympathy means absence of vision, lack of space, life confined to one's own court-yard. Now a little thing looks big when it is set in a small room. The piece of furniture which looked dwarfed in the warehouse assumes quite respectable proportions when set in the narrower surroundings of your own home. If you want a little thing to look big, put it into a small room. A fly is conspicuous on a saucer, it is lost on a lawn. A man of no sympathy, of no spacious vision, is set in a small place, and self bulks big, and becomes possessed by a swelling conceit. But when self is seen in large associations, in wide social spaces, when comparisons are disclosed by broader fields, then self assumes accurate proportions, and self-conceit subsides into a healthy self-esteem. Yes, sympathy is the key to life's proportions, and therefore the parent of humility. We are not surprised therefore that a man whose sympathies went out to the slave, to foreign peoples, and to alien sects, should manifest a character absolutely devoid of self-conceit, and characterized by profound humility. We are not surprised to hear him say, with evident sincerity, 'I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof neither thought myself worthy to come unto thee.' Where sympathy abides, humility dwells.

¶ The sun is so preposterously sunny these days that every bit of tree shade is at par. Each of your men with 60-lb. load on shoulder staggers along under vertical rays. After the first few miles of this beast-of-burden business he spots some shady river, then down goes burden, down goes burden-bearer. . . . Then comes surprise: amazed and amused by turns you see how this shade has the effect of stimulating his mental processes. In sharing the shade I also share some of his roadside philosophy; it is a case of cause and consequence; shade began it, so shade the subject continues to be. The tree sheltering us did it, a stubby not a tall tree. And, once embarked on his homily, the incongruity between his fine rhetoric and ragged get-up made me both blink and think. 'Look,' said he, 'it is the very shortness of this tree that gives us so much shade at the foot. A tall tree is like a haughty hoity-toity man; the taller the tree the smaller the sheltering shade. So, *au contraire,* the more humble the man the more welcome shade he has like the short tree. They all gather round him.[1]

3. Sympathy is here; humility is here; then you have got *a fine discernment*. When you have in a life a broad surface of sympathy, allied with a deep and fruitful humility, you have obtained a sensitive plane of spirit which, like the photographer's most exquisite plate, will register the finest impressions of light. Sympathy and humility are the conditions of moral and spiritual discernment. Let these be absent, and discernment and apprehension are blunted and impaired. Without sympathy and humility life is hardened, and a thousand mystic visitors may knock at our doors unheeded and ignored. But with their presence there is a fine alertness of surface which instinctively discerns the approach of the highest, and tremblingly thrills to its touch. 'The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.' We do not wonder that he discerned the uncommonness of the Christ. We do not wonder that his spirit

[1] Dan Crawford, *Back to the Long Grass*, 25.

thrilled at the mystic Presence, as the leaves of the silver birch thrill in the light wind which stirs with the dawn. 'I am not worthy that *thou* shouldest come!' 'Neither thought I myself worthy to come unto *thee!*' 'Thou!' 'Thee!' He discerned the majesty of the wonderful Presence, and his soul fell prostrate in adoring homage and awe. If we wish to discern the King when He is about, we must keep our hearts soft and sympathetic. We must exercise our pities. We must send our hospitable thoughts over unfrequented fields. We must live in large spaces, in search of ever-widening fellowship, and in the humbleness of mind begotten of hungry sympathy we shall discern the King in His beauty, and shall most assuredly love His appearing.

¶ Laura Lyttelton was extraordinarily beloved, and the testimonies of this love, still surviving in the letters written of her, are passionately earnest and eloquent. They touch on many traits, on her inexhaustible capacity for affection, on her generosity and warmth of heart, on her instinctive sympathy, on her wistful and exquisite humility. But more than all, and again and again, the note of recognition is struck of something in her spiritual and abstract and remote. She was a 'living flame,' 'a vision that had come and gone in a moment's glory.' . . . There are . . . natures to whom has been given a special gift of inward discernment so that they seem to contemplate directly things that the rest of us know only by report, and are watched with a certain awe as if they were in communication with heavenly powers.

> Weave a circle round them thrice,
> And close your eyes in holy dread,
> For they on honey dew have fed
> And drunk the milk of Paradise.

Not in deep divinations only and probings of abstract thought does such a gift show its power, but in all it touches and handles. Even in common talk and common chaff the authentic spirit is revealed. While others blunder round about a meaning, it touches the quick; what others wanted to say but could not say, it says.[1]

[1] *Some Hawarden Letters*, 175.

The Miracle at Nain.

Luke vii. 12.—'Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out.'

If we accept the common reading of the first verse of this narrative, the miracle which is to be our theme was performed on 'the day after' the healing of the centurion's slave at Capernaum; now, although Nain was twenty-five miles from that city, the Lord might easily make the journey between the two places in a single day. For, as Farrar has said, 'Starting, as Orientals always do, early in the cool morning hours, Jesus in all probability sailed to the southern end of the lake, and then passed down the Jordan valley, to the spot where the wadies of the Esdraelon slope down to it; from which point, leaving Mount Tabor on the right hand, and Endor on the left, He might easily have arrived at the little village soon after noon.'

But if, with the Revisers, we adopt another reading, which in their judgment is better supported than the common one, and which differs from it only in one letter, we are under no necessity whatever to account for the rapidity of the Saviour's movement from the one place to the other, since the statement then becomes, 'It came to pass soon after.' It matters little how we decide the question, since in either case the raising of the widow's son finds its proper place in immediate connection with the story of the centurion's faith and the cure of his servant at the intercession of the Jewish elders.

With a little effort of the imagination, we may bring the scene before us. First came the women making loud lamentations, then followed what in this narrative is called 'the bier,' which was not an enclosed coffin, as with us, but a board with narrow sides attached to it, or sometimes a kind of basket made of wicker-work. On this was laid the corpse, wrapped in a linen cloth, but having the face exposed. After the bier, which was borne by friends, who relieved each other at frequent intervals, came the chief mourners and their friends, and after them the sympathizing multitude. In the present instance there was but one mourner, a sad, lonely woman, doubly stricken, for he whose remains lay upon the bier was 'the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.'

What a concentration of sorrow there is in these few words: 'Behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.' It was a funeral, a common sight, but never a commonplace one. It was the funeral of a young man cut off in the beginning of his days, all his plans upset, all his hopes disappointed, all his earthly helpfulness to those dependent on him at an end. It is not so hard to see the aged pass away, for, if they have improved their opportunities,

like ripe fruit,
They fall into their mother's lap, or are
With ease gathered, not harshly plucked
For death mature.

But no age is sure of immunity from death. No period of life, no station in society, no peculiarity of circumstance insures a man against the attack of the last enemy. We know not what a day may bring forth, and we cannot calculate upon an hour. The old must die, but it is equally true that the young may; and when they do, their very youth adds an element of bitterness to the cup which their surviving relatives are made to drink. But this funeral was also that of an only son. Scripture dwells plaintively and frequently on the bitterness of those who bewail the death of their first-born, and the grief of those who mourn for an only son; and those of us who have been in similar circumstances can well understand and appreciate such allusions. When one is taken out of a large family, the sadness is great, but in such a case duty to the living comes to mitigate sorrow for the one who has been removed, and the mourners help to bear each other up. But when an only son is taken, the house is desolate, and its very silence is a trial. The music of the beloved footstep is heard no more, the snatches of song that used so often to fall upon the ear as he came and went are now only things of memory. At the table there is a constant blank, and as the sad reality grows upon the parents there comes forth the irrepressible sigh for

the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still.

But, saddest of all, this was the only son of a widow. The husband of her youth had been taken from her. At first her child had been a part of her burden. There was comfort, no doubt, in his company, but he had to be provided for and educated, and she had to work for the securing of these blessings. But now he had grown up to work for her. He had become her staff, her support, her protector, and it seemed that in her case the words were to be true, 'at evening time it shall be light'—and lo! she was again bereaved. The new wound made the old one bleed afresh; and now, heart-broken and desolate, she was in the utter isolation of a solitude so dreary, that

God Himself
Scarce seemèd there to be.

But He was nearer than she thought, for 'when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came nigh and touched the bier: and the bearers stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up and began to speak. And he gave him to his mother.'

I saw God make a chain; a chain of love
Forged in the workshop of this weary world,
Hammered and joined together in men's hearts
And riveted in blood.
Each link was different; some wrought in bronze,
The deathless love of friends. Some silver shone,
The love of two made one, true man and wife.
But every here and there in God's bright chain
I saw a link of gold, of metal rare,
Surpassing all the rest. Here, polished, shone
The purest and the best of mortal love,
Transforming all creation;
The firmest link in all this heavenly chain
That binds with ever-strengthening bands of love
A mother and a son.[1]

1. The words of Christ's consolation were simple, as all consolation ought to be. In the midst of many, this weeping woman was quite alone. Others with her may have wept, but their tears were tears of sympathy; hers were tears of loneliness. Their sympathy could not sound the profound ocean of her sorrow—she was quite solitary, she stood alone. The very multitude that surrounded her reminded her all the more of her desolate home, and of one who was a multitude to her. It was then, in the midst of this

[1] H. L. Hubbard, *Epiphanies*, 24.

impassioned grief, that she met Christ—met the 'Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.' She saw upon His face the reality of His compassion, the full understanding of her grief. She felt no longer quite alone; another heart had touched hers with the invisible force of silent attraction which, belonging to all mankind, belonged in the greatest conceivable manner to the greatest and the highest Man. The words of others had been many; Christ's were few; but the 'Weep not' echoed in the woman's heart; there was in it infinite pity, mingled with a strange and cheering tone which made her lift her head in hope. That is the consolation of Christ—short, deeply felt, impassioned, inward, silent, unobtrusive, heard in the stillness of the heart, passing by all outward forms of feeling and going down to the centre of grief with a strange and entire comprehension of the heart that trusts it.

2. Christ put this compassion of His at once into action. No sooner had the feelings of pity arisen within Him than He came forward and touched the bier. That is a deep lesson to us. Wishing well as a charity is worth absolutely nothing unless you do well also. It is like standing in a neglected and stony field, and mourning over its condition without ever attempting to plant anything; and yet that is what we are continually doing in everyday life; we are content to pity, and no more—to sit in our comfortable chair, indulge in weak and sentimental compassion, and never sacrifice a single pleasure or a single advantage to help practically the sick and the weary in this world. What an absurd self-deception it is to call ourselves Christians if we never, like Christ, come forward and touch the bier. These are the things which are the test of Christianity. We have a few shillings to spare. There is a little petty luxury we have long wished for, or a fresh pleasure that we desire to taste, and our well-spared money will buy it. Well, shall we give it to ourselves, or help the sick and heal the wounded whose story has been brought to our door? Shall we give up the pleasure and act like Christ, or pass by the bier and leave the widow to lament alone? Oh! go forward and touch the bier; put your pity into action. Your gifts will not be wasted. There is many a widow mourning the loss of her sole support, many a wife before God, calling to Him to spare her husband's life, many a mother weeping bitter tears to Him, and asking Him to restore her child; and one piece of your gold, or one hour of your time, sacrificed for Christ's sake, may often help, with God's blessing, to change sorrow into joy. You too may, like your Saviour, deliver the son of the widow.

¶ Perhaps the best part of the visit was the account Mr. Taylor heard of the opening of a Refuge in one of the cities he had passed on his journey through the province. The place had long been on Pastor Hsi's heart, though he little anticipated the way in which his desire to commence work there was to be granted. Having no means in hand that he could use for the purpose, he prayed the more earnestly day by day at family worship that the Gospel might be given to the Christless population of Hwo-chow.

'We have prayed very often for that city,' his wife said at length, 'is it not time to *do* something there?'

'Gladly would I,' responded her husband, 'but money is lacking. I have nothing to use for the purpose, and renting houses is expensive.'

'How much would it require?' was her next question. And on hearing his reply she went away and said no more about it.

But she too could not forget Hwo-chow; and next morning it was an unadorned little figure that came up and laid some packages on the table after family worship.

'I think,' she said, 'that God has answered our prayers about that city.'

Missing something in her appearance as well as surprised at her words, Pastor Hsi opened one of the packets, to find nothing less than all her jewelry—the gold and silver ornaments, bracelets, rings, and even hair-pins so indispensable to a Chinese lady and that form her marriage dower.

'You cannot surely mean,' he began, 'you cannot do without——'

'Yes, I can,' she said joyfully. 'I can do without these: *let Hwo-chow have the Gospel.*'

And with the money they had brought, the Refuge had been opened and a good work begun.[1]

[1] *Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission*, 412.

Christ's Compassion.

Luke vii. 13.—'And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.'

'WHEN the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her.' Compassion is a Latin word. The Greek word is sympathy and the Saxon word is fellow-feeling. And, as we take it, the meaning is this, that when the Lord saw her He felt with her, suffered with her, made that woman's sufferings His own, bore her grief and carried her sorrow; and because He did so was her Saviour.

1. This miracle stands alone among Christ's miracles in its perfect and absolute simplicity. It was wrought from an impulse of pure pity. No appeal was made to Christ to raise the young man; He was not asked to do it either by the bereaved mother or by any of those who stood by: His own compassion moved Him. Many of Christ's miracles are instructive because they stand associated with the faith of those who ask His help. He admires the faith of the centurion and of the Syrophenician woman, and gives unto them as they will; He tries the faith of others while He succours them. There is no trial of this poor woman, no proving of her; 'Weep not,' He says, and then He touches the bier, and bids the young man arise. It is a deed of pure impulse; the simple motive of compassion appears alone in the narrative.

2. We are not sure of any man until we have seen something of his impulses. He may have a very noble purpose in his life, and be true to it with a rare fidelity; but we are not at ease with him, our affection and trust are not full, until we see how he acts when no constraint is upon him. Some of the saintliest lives fail to win us, because there is a want of naturalness in them; everything seems done to order. Flashes of feeling, the words and deeds of an unguarded hour, these reveal a person; and nothing is more welcome than to find that a friend is consistent in purpose and in impulse. We are at rest when we see that his character is all-harmonious. For purpose is of the intellect and the will, but impulses show the heart; the intent of a man's life shows what he is striving to be, his impulses declare what he actually is. Now, the four Gospels give us many a revelation of Christ's impulses. He did not always live as one conscious that 'the eyes of all were fastened on him'; He did not act with a view to the impression He was going to make on others. And there is a marvellous, a touching, consistency in His whole life. His purpose and His spontaneous feeling were always at one. He was as merciful as He taught us to be; as holy as He said men should seek to be; as zealous and self-devoted as He came into the world to be. His was a life that fulfilled His own ideal; His heart was exactly the same, as Divine, as gracious, as single as His mission.

¶ Never was there a human heart so feeling as His. It thrilled with most delicate sensitiveness to every sight and sound of woe. The very word employed in our version to express His sympathy denotes this exquisite tenderness and sensibility. In the original it means far more than mere ordinary compassion for the miserable. It is derived from a term signifying the womb—the organ of maternity—and signifies the unutterable pity which a mother has for her offspring. It is the strongest and most immediate instinct of our nature. He who made the mother's heart has a mother's heart in His own bosom; and with a yearning maternal love He has compassion upon the poor bereaved mother. With the counterpart of the feeling she experienced towards her dead child, He pitied her own distress.[1]

3. The perfect humanity of Christ, true to our every want, true to the best and deepest feeling, is illustrated in the narrative before us. But Christ is also the revelation of God, and His perfect humanity gives us a view of God we sorely need. Impulsive compassion, personal tenderness, a ready sympathy with every sorrow, every weakness, every trouble is just that which Nature does not show us in God; of which our own thoughts about Him do not assure us, although we long for it, seek for it with a solemn pitiful craving. 'The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.' 'O Lord how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all.' 'He left

[1] H. Macmillan, *Our Lord's Three Raisings from the Dead*, 85.

not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.' But this great and good God, is not He one to whom we must climb up? Does He in compassion and tender personal sympathy come down to us? Is He moved by our sorrows, 'touched with a feeling of our infirmities?' Nature reveals one whom the strong may adore; a God for the happy. If our hearts are thoroughly peaceful, our minds well regulated, and our intellectual vision clear, we can perceive His goodness, His wisdom, and His greatness. But for the weak, the unhappy, for souls in trouble and eyes dim with tears, for hearts crushed by disaster and spirits frail, confused by anguish; what has Nature to give of consolation or of sympathy?

Is there nothing in heaven like the warm personal impulses, the movings of tenderness, that make our friends come in to see us, and mingle the tears of their compassion with the tears of our distress? We want to know if we seem exactly the same to God now in our weakness and misery as if no disaster had befallen us. Is God exactly the same to us? Has He no other feeling toward us now than He would have had if nothing had gone wrong with us in life and heart? We see His gracious general purpose toward all the works of His hands; does not God wish to comfort the sufferer? Is God not moved because I am brought so low? Is there not an impulse in Him for my tears?

This narrative supplies the answer: 'When the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.' The impulses of Christ, the compassion moving toward each one according to each one's need; the truly human words, human because they were exactly what every heart wanted; the gentle, unobtrusive sympathy that came as a cordial to the worn and sorrowing soul; the tenderness so readily touched and so promptly responsive; all this Christ brought with Him from heaven, all this is in God.

There is no need of words of mine to tell
My heart to Thee; Thou needest not to spell,
As others must, my hidden thoughts and fears,
From out my broken words, my sobs, or tears;
Thou knowest all, knowest far more than I,
The inner meaning of each tear or sigh.
Thou mayest smile, perchance, as mothers smile
On sobbing children, seeing all the while
How soon will pass away the endless grief,
How soon will come the gladness and relief;
But if Thou smilest, yet Thy sympathy
Measures my grief by what it is to me.

4. There is a lesson in the calm simplicity with which Christ wrought this miracle. It is in striking contrast with His anxiety and sternness manifested in the raising of Jairus' daughter, and His trouble at the grave of Lazarus. There He met with positive unbelief; here He has to deal only with sorrow. Grief moves the Saviour, but it does not trouble Him; unbelief distresses and distracts Him. He puts the scoffing crowd out of the chamber of Jairus' little daughter; He can do no mighty works in the presence of unbelief. Martha and Mary distrust Him; they hint the charge they do not utter, 'Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.' Such hopeless sorrow is one thing in a person who, like this widow of Nain, seems not to have hitherto known anything of Christ; it is a very different thing in Mary and Martha, who have been in constant familiar intercourse with Jesus, and should have known that no grief was hopeless to His followers. Christ has to reprove, to exhort the sisters, whose great distress shows waning trust in Him. This is the reason of the distress of Christ at the grave in Bethany; He 'groans' and 'weeps,' and is 'troubled in spirit' that bereavement has such power to conquer faith. The contrast between these miracles of resurrection is very instructive. It shows us the higher courage which Christ expects of those who have known Him; it is an offence, it is faithlessness, in them to sorrow as others who have no hope. And it tells us too that it is not men's sorrows, but their unbelief, which is a burden to Christ's heart. Sorrow—it vanishes at His word; suffering—He can dispel it in an instant. With want of faith He has to struggle; that was the real reason of Christ's tearfulness, the strait and anguish and conflict of His life.

Simplicity is the great want of modern Christian life. It is earnest, but it is somewhat forced; it follows many a good plan and way, but these are too often formal. If it were deeper, it would be less fussy; if it ruled us absolutely in heart

and character, in impulse and in life, it might perhaps be less demonstrative, it would also be more effective. Christian speech is not the only Christian power. It is a true power; it is a spiritual, a Divine power. But mightiest, most effective of all, is a deep, full Christian life, earnest in devotedness to God and man. We should be happier, more natural, less constrained in doing kind and pleasant and gracious deeds, if we had ever abiding in us the spirit and purpose of Christ. Formality would give place to heartiness. The life that is an adorning of 'the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things' will abound in truly human impulses and deeds devoid of self-consciousness, like this simple Divine act of Jesus at the gates of Nain.

¶ Of Dr. Chalmers it was said by one who knew him intimately: 'In simplicity he was a child. By simplicity we do not mean the simplicity of the head; of that he had none; but we refer to a certain quality of heart and life which gives a directness to all actions, and a certain beautiful unconsciousness of self—an outgoing of the whole nature that we see in children.[1]

Reunion in Heaven.

Luke vii. 15.—'He delivered him to his mother.'

Our Lord appears in this miracle not only as giving life to the body, but as healing the inner wounds of the spirit. For why was the widow's son restored to life? Surely, whatever higher ends may have been served by this great miracle, the narrative seems to tell us that in one sense, at any rate, it was wrought for the sake of the bereaved mother. Thus, when our Lord saw her first, He had compassion on her, and said, 'Weep not.' And then, after the raising of her son, the words of the text are added, 'He delivered him to his mother.' It is as if He was not content to restore the gift of life, but must also Himself bind up the broken heart, and with His own gracious hand reunite those whom death had divided. And what does this action signify? What is the meaning of this wonderful, transporting vision in a world of sorrow? What does the Lord of Life intend to teach when He restores a son to life and to the heart of a bereaved parent? Surely it must be more than a prophecy of what is yet to be. He delivered him to his mother. Will not the day come when many mothers and many sons, many severed hearts, shall be reunited by Him in ties of love without alloy and without end?

With this thought in view, let us consider some of the proofs that God has given us in support of what is one of the dearest hopes of our nature, namely, that we shall know each other hereafter; that death is but a short separation, and those whom it parts here will, if found worthy, be reunited again where there shall be no more parting.

1. The first proof of this is to be found in the very nature of particular attachments. God has made us for them, and we cannot exist without them. Love is an essential part of our nature, and it must have its objects. It was made for man as well as for God. It is nothing to the purpose that in our present disordered state these two functions so often clash and interfere, that we love the creature more than the Creator, giving it that place in the heart which belongs to Him. We need not do this. Indeed, in doing so we dishonour even the creatures whom we love, and whose greatest glory is not apart from God, but in Him and through Him. But now take this subordinate love in any of man's earthly relations and consider it. What does it express and testify concerning itself? Look at love's constancy through life, its willingness to do and to endure for the beloved object. See how sorrow and suffering, and lapse of time, instead of detaching, only serve to rivet it more closely; how nothing by which it is tried can weary or provoke—nothing can embitter or alienate it; how love alone warms even the extremest age, and shines out with perhaps a tenderer, purer ray over the wreck of vanished years—amid the prostration of strength, the failure of memory, the decay of all other faculties, and the heavy shadows of a closing day. Love alone does not die before death. All other things do. The limbs fail, the eye grows dim, the tongue falters, the glory of the intellect departs, and the spacious chambers of thought are empty. Love alone remains, surviving all. And is not this a prediction and pledge that it will still live on, and find again those to whom it has never been untrue? Are

[1] R. E. Welsh, *Man to Man*, 83.

not all God's works complete and perfect, and shall we acknowledge a break and failure in that one work which in our nature discovers most of Himself? As physiologists have traced in inferior creatures the rudiments of a higher order of being which yet in their own age was never called into existence, though their nature thus stood a mute prophecy of a coming creation, so may we perhaps see in earthly love—never blessed, never perfected here, still yearning after those it loses and refusing comfort—a pledge and presage of what will be in that better order when God will comfort it by giving back the lost again.

2. But, after all, this is only what Nature says. Let us turn then to the gospel, and see how far it confirms the hope of being united hereafter. Consider how the doctrine of our Lord's Incarnation bears upon the fulfilment of it. God the Son has taken upon Him the nature of man in all its essential parts and properties. As He is God from all eternity, so in time He assumed manhood to Himself in the one person. Thus God and Man are one in Christ. But to what a place is our whole nature exalted through this ineffable mystery, and with what a transcendent importance does it clothe every element in its composition! Whatever constitutes man now belongs to the person of Him who is God. It is something too great to convey in words, yet it is plain that all our faculties and powers are by this union raised to a dignity above that which belongs to any other creature, and endowed with a permanence which awes and confounds the thought. This is what we mean when we say that the Son of God was made man—born of the Virgin Mary. He took into His Godhead our entire nature with all its abiding attributes—soul and body, reason and will, feeling, affection, sympathy—and made them His own for ever. And this being so, let us see what light it throws on the subject of future recognition.

Now it must at once strike us in reading the Gospels that when our Lord was on earth, He did not manifest Himself in the same way or with the same measure of favour to all who were about Him. We see this even in the case of the multitudes whom He taught or healed; but we see it more distinctly in the case of those who were admitted to a nearer intercourse with Him. Some were allowed to approach Him more closely, and some remained farther off; some were distinguished with peculiar favour, and admitted to an intimacy not vouchsafed to the rest. Thus we find that He chose twelve of His disciples to accompany Him wherever He went, and of these twelve three were specially selected to be with Him at the raising of Jairus' daughter, at the Transfiguration, and in the Garden of Gethsemane. We are told that John was the beloved disciple; that He called Peter blessed, and addressed him thrice in those words of so great tenderness and so little reproach, 'Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?' He said to the eleven, 'I call you not servants, but friends.' Again, we are told that Jesus loved Martha and Mary, and Lazarus; and that He also loved—yet what a different love it must have been—the young man who had great possessions. And lastly, can we hear that single word addressed to the weeping Magdalene after His resurrection—her own name—without feeling that it is the utterance of an especial regard? If, then, we can thus discover in our Saviour the tokens of this discriminating affection, this choice of one before another to be more nearly and intimately His, the fact is in itself a proof that particular attachments are no transitory and fleeting element in our nature, suited for this state only and not to survive it; but that, by being His, they belong to what is essential and imperishable in us, and will outlive the accidents and the end of this condition of our being.

3. Throughout the New Testament we find particular ties and friendships, instead of being dissolved or weakened by the gospel, rendered far deeper, purer, and more firm. For example, consider the wonderful way in which Peter, James, and John were associated when our Lord drew these three so close to Himself. Must not this fact of their union in Him have been the ground of a friendship truer and more exalted than anything earthly could originate? Or the love of Jesus to Lazarus and his sisters—what must that love have made them to each other? Or think of our Saviour's last words to His mother and to John, and what an effect those Divine words must have wrought on both! Again, note the overflowing tenderness of Paul to his converts

throughout his writings—the way in which he speaks of his son Timothy, his son Titus, his son Onesimus; Luke, the beloved physician; Barnabas, his fellow-apostle; Philemon, his dearly beloved and fellow-labourer; Epaphroditus, for whose sickness he was so much grieved; Clement and his fellow-labourers, whose names were in the Book of Life. Are these friendships of a kind to end with death? Are these friends for time only or for eternity? Can we suppose that the Apostles, knit so closely in their Lord, ceased to know each other when their life here closed; that Peter and James and John were friends only on earth; that Paul was not to know any more his son Timothy, whom he begot in the gospel, or Philemon, whom he reminds that he owed to him his own self? Surely it is superfluous to multiply such questions. The existence of these ties and affections under such circumstances implies their continuance; but if it does so in them, it does so in us likewise, though so far behind them. For the Church is one, and if we are members of it at all, we are admitted to the same privileges as the Apostles and their converts—as the whole body of believers from the beginning to the end.

¶ To the widow of Nain George Macdonald speaks: O mother! mother, wast thou more favoured than other mothers? Or was it that, for the sake of all mothers as well as thyself, thou wast made the type of the universal mother with the dead son—the raising of him but a foretaste of the one universal bliss of mothers with dead sons? That thou wert an exception would have ill met thy need, for thy motherhood could not be justified in thyself alone. It could not have its rights save on grounds universal. Thy motherhood was common to all thy sisters. To have helped thee by exceptional favour would not have been to acknowledge thy motherhood. That must go mourning still, even with thy restored son in its bosom, for its claims are universal or they *are* not. Thou wast indeed a chosen one, but that thou mightest show to all the last fate of the mourning mother; for in God's dealings there are no exceptions. His laws are universal as He is infinite. Jesus wrought no new thing—only the works of the Father. What matters it that the dead come not back to us, if we go to them? *What matters it?* said I! It is tenfold better. Dear as home is, he who loves it best must know that what he calls home is not home, is but a shadow of home, is but the open porch of home, where all the winds of the world rave by turns, and the glowing fire of the true home casts lovely gleams from within.[1]

Stronger than life is death, for all things die.
Stronger than death is life, for death is nought.
Life,—what is life? A flash that streaks the sky.
Death,—what is death? A name, a haunting thought.
Stronger than life is death, for death subdues
Life's flaring torchlight with its argent rays.
Stronger than death is life, for life renews
Through death the firesprings of its vanished days.
Stronger than life is love, for love's warm breath
Kindles and keeps aglow life's myriad fires.
Stronger than death is love, for love through death
Kindles a larger life when life expires.
Life,—what is life? Love's foreglow in the skies.
Death,—what is death? Love dawning on our eyes.[2]

The Baptist's Perplexity.

Luke vii. 19.—'John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?'

This incident has laid an arrest upon the spiritual imagination of the world. It is so surprising, so wistful, so poignant, indeed altogether so human, that men have deeply felt its pathos, and have been held by its solicitude. Two interpretations have been given of this eager inquiry. From the very beginning some interpreters have said: It was not John's faith that was uncertain. He knew the quenching of vision, the frustrated hope, the assurance that faded into utter uncertainty. No poignant anxiety perplexed his soul. He had seen the vision, he had heard the voice. And,

> Whoso has felt the spirit of the highest
> Can not confound nor doubt him nor deny.

It was his disciples that faltered. They saw the light fade, the glory die away. And for their sakes he sent the great inquiry: 'Tell us, art thou he that cometh? Is our hope firmly based,

[1] *The Miracles of our Lord*, 191.
[2] E. Holmes, *Sonnets and Poems*, 36.

our confidence secure? Give us the indubitable witness, declare us plainly the glory of thy name!'

But others, with a surer instinct, have said: This is John's own inquiry. All the spiritual passion of his heart throbs through this anxious question. He is that watcher of the night who has seen the last star swallowed up in total eclipse, who has shivered with blank misgiving and desolate hope. The weariness of the waiting, the overwrought nature, the pathetic inaction of the prison of Machaerus, have done their work. It is his soul that cries out for certainty, for a light to guide him in the dark, for hope to be his guerdon and his stay. 'Tell us, tell me—for faith craves a personal certainty—tell me, art thou the coming one, or must we wearily look away, and with disappointed hopes wait again for another?' It is faith's eclipse, the fading of hope, the disintegration of certainty. That surely is the deepest interpretation, and the truest; that brings the story very near to life, and gives us great hope.

And it does not make the Baptist's character less beautiful.

¶ In the jewel room of the British Museum there is an exquisitely cut gem, upon which there is carved, in profile, a human face. We were admiring both the beauty of the jewel, and the delicacy of the carving, which has given a meaning to the splendour it has enhanced, when the custodian took a small board, and held it, like a roof, over the case in which the gem was suspended. The front and top lights were thus excluded, and the jewel was in the shadow of the board. But the sun's rays, which now came to our eyes only through the carving, developed minute beauties within it which, in the light, had been unseen. Every line of the carving, every delicacy of the veining, every hue and tone now shone in brilliant distinctness of rich warm colour, and the whole glowed with a peculiar radiance, although it was in the shade.[1]

1. In the earlier stages of his prophetic career John had confidently proclaimed the evangel that the Kingdom of God was at hand. The long-dreamed-of was actualized. The impatiently-waited-for had come. The age of gold had dawned, the Kingdom was at hand! Now what did that mean to John the Baptist? It meant this, that the Divine sovereignty of the world, which had hitherto been partially veiled, would now be plainly revealed. It meant that forces of righteousness which had moved in the affairs of men incognito, and had therefore been despised, would now assume visible majesty, and be honoured and revered. A spiritual sovereignty was to assert itself, its laws as resistless as the laws of nature, and its operations as patent as the movements of the planets. To John the Baptist the coming of the Kingdom meant the obtrusion of a spiritual government whose forces could not be checked, whose ministry could not be bribed, and whose prevalence was irresistible. 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand,' not coming up the distant streets of time; it is at hand; it is near; the forces are even now over our threshold, and pervading life with their subtle and energetic exercise. What will be the nature of their ministry? To John the Baptist their work was to be twofold. They would integrate, and they would disintegrate; they would consolidate and they would dissolve.

(1) The coming of the Kingdom meant for John the strong vigorous ministry of forces of *disintegration*. Mystic hands would lay hold of towering establishments of iniquity, and would pull them into ruin! The hitherto immovable would crumble into fragments. The empire of devilry would begin to break up, and its primary institutions would totter to their fall! That was what the coming of the Kingdom meant to John; it meant the letting loose of an army of disintegrators, who would pick away the cement out of evil structures, and soften their foundations, and topple them into irretrievable ruin. The very words of the Baptist express the invading forces at work—axe, fan, wind, fire!—destructives by which the dominion of sin was to be for ever overturned. 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand'; and its coming was the diffusion of a fervent atmosphere in which all iniquities would dissolve, as threatening icebergs are dissolved when they drift into the currents of warmer seas.

(2) But the forces of disintegration were also by their very nature forces of *integration*. The destructive would also be the constructive. The rain that rots the dead wood nourishes the living tree. The agent of corruption is also the minister of life. The forces that disintegrate the evil will

[1] N. Wiseman, *The Messages of Christ*, 3.

also integrate the good. What to one is a menace will be to the other a shield. That was John's happy confidence respecting the ministries of the Kingdom. They would create an atmosphere which, while enervating the false, would brace and invigorate the true. He anticipated the confirmation and consolidation of the good. He expected that the scattered fragments of the empire of right would be unified into irresistible strength. He expected that the bad man would become limp, and that the good man would become forceful. Such was the twofold anticipation of the Baptist when he proclaimed the advent of the Kingdom of Heaven—the enthronement of the right, in the government of which the righteous should flourish, and before which all rebels should be most assuredly crushed and destroyed.

2. That was John's faith. This spiritual sovereignty was persuasive and ubiquitous as an atmosphere. It would be and go everywhere! Wherever sin was, the Kingdom would create rot; wherever truth was, the Kingdom would nourish growth. See, then, what application he makes of his faith. See what daring speculations he makes of his assumption. Here in Herod's palace is a great and clamant wrong. Domestic sacrilege has been committed. The fair sanctities of home life have been befouled. There is iniquity upon the hearthstone. Into the palace goes the Baptist. He stands before the king. He confronts him with his sin. 'It is not lawful for thee to have her!' 'It is not lawful!' He enunciates one of the laws of the Kingdom and anticipates that the forces of the Kingdom will operate through his speech and terrify the perfidious king! 'It is not lawful for thee,' and John expected Herod to become limp with fear. But what happened? Carnal sovereignty asserted itself, and the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Heaven appeared lame and impotent. The mystic forces of disintegration appeared to be ineffective or idle, while the forces of the world leaped into strength. 'Herod laid hold of John and bound him in prison.' 'It is not lawful,' said the servant of apparently infinite power. 'Get into the dungeon,' said the commander of the petty forces of time. Where now are the mystic, helpful powers of the infinite? 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' 'And Herod bound John in prison.' Where are the forces which were supposed to be at hand?

(1) The prophet's experience is not a rarity; it is quite a commonplace. The forces of the heavenly frequently appear to retreat and to be beaten before the forces of the world. A young fellow came to me a Christmas or two ago and told me he had been summarily dismissed from his work. He was a fellow of a sensitive conscience, with a fine discernment of Christ, and a splendid confidence in the nearness and helpfulness of the forces of the Kingdom of God. He was ordered by his master to take two quantities of currants from the same cask, and ticket them in the window under different prices, and so suggest to the public that one sample was of superior quality to the other. He declined on the plea that it was not right, and he was dismissed on the spot. 'It is not lawful for thee!' and for answer he was turned into the streets. There was no apparent intervention of the forces of the Kingdom. He wandered about for months in search of work. His master apparently suffered no lapse or check in his prosperous career, and now I am told he is about to retire into a large and dignified ease. All I will say is this—there is a hell, and he may come to know it even in the season of his retirement, and 'at evening-time' it shall not be light! What, then, shall we say to these things? It does appear as if the man of the world had triumphed, and the son of the Kingdom had been subdued. It does appear as if the carnal sovereignty had eclipsed the spiritual sovereignty, and that the forces of the Kingdom had been put to flight! 'Herod bound John in prison.' [1]

(2) Here is a towering evil in the land. One statesman declares it to be worse than the combined calamities of war, pestilence and famine. Another statesman says that unless the commonwealth throttle it, it will throttle the commonwealth. A third statesman declares that among all social problems it casts the rest into eclipse. Well, 'the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Its disintegrating forces are near. On the assumption that they are our allies we march against the gigantic evil of the liquor trade. And what happens? There are no signs of disintegration. The signs are rather of consolidation. It grows more bold. It

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grows more impertinent. It is becoming more dictatorial, and its declared policy at every election is the defence and security of itself. We attack it through our legislature and we are repulsed. We try a non-party bill for the protection of little children, and we are repulsed. What shall we say to these things? Where are the disintegrating forces of the Kingdom? 'The kingdom is at hand.' John thought he would have cowed Herod with a threat, and Herod bound him in prison. We thought that boastful iniquities would have succumbed before the force of purity and truth, and lo! they climb into the uppermost seats of the legislature, and lay their throttling hands on legislation at its birth. 'Herod laid hold of John and bound him.'

3. Is it any wonder that a subtle doubt began to insinuate itself into the prophet's mind? It stole into his life like a sharp, chill wind that stiffens the limbs. 'Art thou He? This prison experience makes me ask the question! I proclaimed the evangel—the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, and I assumed that its citizens were to have rule and conquest. I never anticipated imprisonments and bonds. Art thou He? Art thou really King? Is the throne established? Are its forces at work? Art thou He?' That is the doubt that frequently distresses the mind. It is not merely an old-world doubt that disturbed men and women in primitive times. It has prevailed through the ages, and lays its chilling influence upon the souls of men to-day. 'Art thou He?' Is the King of right veritably enthroned, and are His innumerable ministers at work? We look abroad and we see how soon the weeds can overrun a garden and kill the rarer and fairer growth. 'Art thou He? Am I right after all? Or am I holding on to a fiction, the baseless fabric of a dream?' That was the icy doubt that stole into the fervent heart of the Baptist. He turned his doubt into an agonizing prayer, and sighed it out at the Master's feet. 'Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?'

¶ There was a peculiar sting in John's trial. The child of the open air, his sinewy limbs craving vigorous exercise, John had come to be the centre of excitement and natural interest. To cage the eagle is cruel, while the dove has never had any other experience. In such outdoor natures limitation and check are apt to breed distrust and timidity, and the wrung heart complains because it cannot be silent, speaking what it feels. Doubt is sometimes not so much the fruit of unbelief as of perplexity and disappointment. So here, shut up with uncongenial companions, alone with memory and sad surmise, John doubted.[1]

4. What answer had the Master to make? This is how the Evangelist records what happened. 'In that hour he cured many.' That was the answer to the Baptist's doubt. Herod was enthroned in cruel might. The dungeon was the dwelling-place of the prophet. The Lord's messenger was gagged. Evil appeared to be triumphant. And yet—'In that hour he cured many.' 'Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen.' That is how the Master renewed the prophet's smouldering faith. John wants proofs, does he? He wants evidence that the forces of the Kingdom are at work. He wants to see signs? Let him look close enough! Let his observation cover the widest area! His prison is not the world! Herod's apparent majesty does not exhaust all the factors of the case! 'The blind receive their sight.' How does John explain that? 'The deaf hear.' How does John explain that? 'The dead are raised up.' How does John explain that? Let him explain these facts on any other supposition than that the Kingdom is come and the King is at work. There are many things about that spell 'mystery'; there are many more about that spell 'kingdom.' John wants signs. The signs are abounding!

That is the answer which revives the drooping faith. Look close enough, and look wide enough, and the evidences are abounding. We seem to have been checked in our onslaught against the drink traffic; but then this very week men and women have been elevated out of filth into purity and holiness. Mammon seems stupendous; but this very week lepers have been cleansed! Let us not close our eyes to these things. One transformed life is evidence enough to allay the gravest doubt. Only let us get our eyes fixed upon one miracle of grace, evident in the transfiguration of one man or woman, and we shall have evidence that the King is near and the Kingdom is at hand.

[1] N. Wiseman, *The Messages of Christ*, 14.

¶ When Prince Maurice received a threatening message from a monarch who menaced the very existence of the Dutch Republic, the prince silently conducted the ambassadors to the great hall of the Hague. There thirty-eight banners were suspended from the roof; the prince had captured them from the very king who now threatened him. Maurice silently pointed to these trophies as his only reply, and the significant action was sufficient to prevent his enemy from troubling him again.[1]

The Way with Doubt.

Luke vii. 19.—'Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?'

THE question is sometimes raised, whether men are responsible for their opinions, and whether God will punish men for their unbelief, if they have honestly been unable to believe in Christ. This is a much more difficult question than many think. It is easy to take it for granted that doubt is honest. But, in reality, it may not be so. It may be a vague mist of opinion in which the mind has allowed itself to become enveloped, because it has never had the courage to think its doubts through. There may be vanity in it; for scepticism is sometimes worn as a feather in the cap. The claims of Christ are so great and have so much *primâ facie* authority that no one in a right state of mind can reject them without long thought and much pain. The responsibility of communicating doubt to others that they may be withdrawn from the faith of Christ is greater still; and those who feel that their duty lies that way may well ponder beforehand this word, 'Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.'

The Baptist's scepticism was real, but it was honest; and we may learn from him how to manage our own doubts. Notice three things.

1. First, he *put his doubts into words*.—Doubt is most dangerous when it is vague; condense it into definite questions, and immediately the light begins to break. Put it, for example, into John's questions: 'Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?' 'He that should come'—how much faith is in that! When once the heart is persuaded that there is Someone who should come—Someone who must come because He is indispensable to loose the bands of sin and to unite me to God—it is not far from faith in Christ. For, put the other question, 'Look we for another?' If Jesus of Nazareth be not the Man of men, where are we to look for him?

2. Secondly, John *sent directly to Christ*.—He did not go on devouring his own heart in his cell; nor did he do what would have been worse, grumble to his disciples. Scepticism would be short-lived if we brought our doubts at once to God. He was a wise man who, in religious darkness, cried out, 'Save me, O God, if there be a God.'

¶ The best thing to do with doubts is to turn them into prayers. 'I conquered my doubts,' says Sir Thomas Browne, 'upon my knees.'

¶ What you say about the state of your mind does not surprise me, and I trust that your views of Christian truth will ere long exert a more distinctly felt influence both in tranquillising and purifying the mind and heart. It was a good remark of a person in circumstances somewhat similar to yours, 'I see there is nothing for me but my Bible and my knees.'[1]

3. Thirdly, John *never thought of withdrawing his condemnation* of the conduct of Herod and Herodias. Some have spoken of his doubt as treachery; but this is quite an exaggeration. It would have been treachery if, believing himself deceived and neglected, he had made this an excuse for renouncing his testimony and so obtaining release from prison. Never is religious doubt so dangerous as when it is made an excuse for giving rein to the flesh. He who, though perplexed in faith, remains pure in deeds, will ultimately fight his way through doubt and come safely out on the other side.

¶ There is a lesson to be learnt from the firmness of the Baptist. It is to be unshaken in our truth and right, both in act and speech, against worldly influences when they are evil; and even when they are not evil in themselves, when they make us weak or vacillating. Everyone knows the temptation of John; it was that of the preacher of righteousness suddenly made the adviser of a king, and then as suddenly required to condone

[1] N. Wiseman, *The Messages of Christ*, 21.

[1] *The Letters of Dr. John Brown*.

the crime of the king. The same sort of temptation, in its spirit, attacks us all at one time or another. You may purchase the love you long for if you will give way on this point of truth, if you will gloss over your objection to a wrong mode of action. You may purchase promotion if you will keep what you say within the bounds which social opinion prescribes to the safe man, and yield to those who tell you, in their flattering way, that plain speaking will spoil your influence; for no doubt it was said to John that to offend the king would destroy the good he was doing in Judea. You may purchase wealth if you will condone your partner's or your principal's dishonesty, or even shut your eyes to a little commercial grazing of the edge of it. You may get into a higher range of society if you will flatter the follies, or smile on the vices, or enslave yourself to the caprices of some of those above you in rank. You may find the path of life velvet to your tread if you will modify your convictions on political and social topics; if you will keep what is called a wise silence, if you will avoid giving advice, and find your way round thorny points, and say nothing about the wrong-doing of great people, and be tolerant to evil except when all the world is on the side of intolerance. It is the sliding, slimy life of a snake, and you have your reward. No one is afraid of being offended by you; you are praised as a safe man. You are flattered because you flatter; you keep your followers if you are a public man. You live, getting wealthier, more respected perhaps, and you die regretted for a day or two by society, which misses one who never touched it but with a caress. But after all, it is a snake's life, and not a man's; it is the life of the world, and not the life of a child of God; it is the life of one clothed in soft garments and living in king's houses, and not the life of one who knows the lonely dignity of the wilderness with truth and honour, and the communion which a man may have with God. Each must choose for himself; but, for our part, let us, men and women, choose rather to die with the Baptist in Herod's prison than lead a life the name of which is corruption and its course and end the serpent's curse, 'Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.' [1]

[1] S. A. Brooke, *The Fight of Faith*, 11.

¶ Mark Sabre in Mr. Hutchinson's famous novel says: 'I loathe compromise. More than anything. Compromise is accepting a little of what you know to be wrong in order to get a little of what you imagine to be right.' [1]

Offence in Christ.

Luke vii. 23.—'Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.'

It is surely the most startling of all Christ's warnings that men should find any possible occasion of stumbling in Him. We are prepared to find it in the world, in the opposition of the devil, in the proven insincerity of others—but in Him! And yet experience assures us that it is no remote or impossible contingency. For who does not know some disappointment of hope, some failure of expectation, the weariness of an unanswered prayer, or the ache of a crushed heart which seems to evoke no sympathetic answer from the Lord? And who does not know how all this generates an unspoken and almost unspeakable distrust, a feeling that we have not been treated quite fairly, which develops in time into actual resentment, until His yoke becomes positively irksome, and we challenge His right to control our lives? Sooner or later, if unchecked, this spirit ends in secret repudiation of His lordship, and often in outward renunciation also of all spiritual hopes and aims.

The offence may be *circumstantial*. I find myself in a prison-house—a narrow sphere, a sick chamber, an unpopular position—when I had hoped for wide and great opportunities. Yes, but He knows what is best for me. My environment is of His determining. He means it to intensify my faith, to draw me into nearer communion with Himself, to ripen my power. In the dungeon my soul should prosper.

The offence may be *mental*. I am haunted by doubts, perplexities, questions, which I cannot solve. I had hoped that, when I gave myself to Him, my sky would always be clear; but often it is overspread by mist and cloud. Yet let me believe that, if difficulties remain, it is that I may learn to trust Him all the more implicitly—to trust and not be afraid. Yes, and by my intellectual conflicts I am trained to be a *Seelen-Führer*, a tutor, to other storm-driven men.

[1] *If Winter Comes*, 157.

The offence may be *spiritual*. Temptation and sin continue to dog my steps, and Zion in her anguish with Babylon must cope. I had fancied that it would be otherwise, and that in His fold I should never feel the biting winds at all. But it is best as it is. His grace is magnified. My own character is matured. His heaven is sweeter at the end of the day. There I shall look back on the turnings and trials of the way, and, as Samuel Rutherford says, I shall sing the praises of my Guide.

So, let come what will come, His will is welcome; and I shall refuse to be offended in my loving Lord.

¶ After all, the causes of offence are not in Christ, but in ourselves. Two men go to a feast which includes every delicacy. The one is hungry, the other sick, with no appetite. The feast is quite the same to both, the difference is in the men themselves. Two men go to hear an oratorio; the one has a taste for and some knowledge of music, the other is troubled with the musical representation of sacred things, so that while one is ravished with the music, to the other it is only a jangling noise. The oratorio is the same to both, the difference is in the persons themselves. Two men go to a picture gallery to see a picture of Christ. The one has a taste for art, the other none, and he is troubled with doubts about the propriety of such representations. One rejoices in Raphael's divine masterpiece, the other sees only so much canvas and paint. The difference is in the men themselves, the picture is the same to both. So here, causes of offence are not in Christ but in ourselves.[1]

The Steadfastness of the Baptist.

Luke vii. 24.—'A reed shaken with the wind.'

HAVE you ever watched the reeds by a river bank when the water was in flood and the wind was blowing? The wind attacks them from above, the rush of the stream strains them from below, and they bend and tremble and recover, and quiver again from root to top like a soul in helpless pain. This is what the Master saw, and, seeing, bore in His mind; and when the image of the Baptist rose before Him—stern, uncompromising, fixed in moral strength, and with it the Jordan bank where first He met him, and the baptismal hour when He stood in the flowing river—He remembered the reeds as they shook in impotent vacillation in the wind, clashed the two images together in vivid contrast, and said, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? a reed shaken by the wind in the stream of Jordan? nay, a rock, deep-rooted, firm, immovable.

1. Everything we know of the Baptist confirms this view. Separated early from those city influences which dissipate the energies over too many interests, he learnt concentration of will in the solitary life of the desert. It may be said that solitude does not, by itself, encourage devotion to a cause half so much as it centralizes the thoughts round self, and that such concentration would unfit a man to do the work which the Baptist had to do—the work of revealing another, and not himself, as the Messiah. It might make him a St. Bernard, who should himself be the head of the Church; it would not make him the mere voice which proclaimed another as its head. And the objection might be true had the Baptist really been left alone. But he must often have visited Jerusalem, and heard the story of his birth, and thus known that he was dedicated to the work of making known another. And, moreover, the same thought was kept constantly before him by the popular excitement on the subject of the Messiah. One of those deep expectations which in all ages have stirred nations stirred Judea at this time. John looked into the heart of his nation, and into his own heart, and knew, as self-observant men must know, what he could do and could not do; and he settled that he was not that Christ, but was sent to prepare His way.

With the unshaken firmness which Christ saw as a root of his character, he accepted that position at once and for ever, fixed himself in it as the work of his life, and, even in the midst of all the temptations of a popular preacher, never faltered in his choice of the lower place, never for one moment ceased to point away from himself to another. It is as noble a piece of self-renunciation as history affords, and it was unshaken. How beautiful on the lips of the austere man are the words, full of humility, full of repressed love, full of gentleness: 'The latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose.' 'He

[1] A. Guthrie, *Robertson of Irvine*, 222.

must increase, but I must decrease'; 'I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?' This was a strong man.

2. Then again, how firm the character was which never in its teaching stepped beyond the limits of its special work. A hundred temptations beset him to do so; everyone asked him to say more; but he never went beyond the path he had, under God's inspiration, hewn out for himself. He was never more than the Old Testament prophet—the preacher of a stern morality in common life—the threatener of judgment on the wrong-doer and the hypocrite—the foreteller of the Messiah—the declarer of a wider religion than the exclusiveness of the Jew allowed. Only, as he was the last of the prophets and the nearest to Christ, these elements of the prophetical teaching were more sharply and concisely put, more fully expressed by him than by any of the others. No denunciation in the Old Testament is as strong as this—'O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?' No morality in the Old Testament is as shortly, firmly put as this—'Now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees.' No prophecy of Christ and His work is as near as this—'There standeth one among you, whom ye know not.' 'Behold the Lamb of God.' No hint that the Jewish exclusiveness was false to the universal love of God is so clear as this—'God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.'

Yet not one step did he take beyond his mission, though he must have seen some distance beyond it. Another man would have embodied his half-expectations in words, would have tried to realize his dreams in his teaching, and so have stirred the people by the vague excitements which follow on vague phrases; but John would not say one syllable beyond what he knew. This is real firmness of character. This is to be no reed shaken in the wind.

3. Nor was he more the victim of outward influences than of the influences which might arise in his own mind. Master of himself, he was master of circumstances. No wind blowing from fear or favour, from ambition or wealth, could shake his moral purpose, or his steadfast indifference to all but right. The king consulted him upon a point which he might, by an exercise of casuistry, at that time have ruled in his favour. Wealth, honour, and court favour were in his power. He might have thought that with these things he could push his mission further than as a preacher in the wilderness. It was the same temptation that came to Christ, 'All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.' But nothing served to touch the second Elijah. He too despised kings when kings were wrong. He too denounced them as plagues and curses when they sinned. Not for a moment did he give way to that vilest of all vile opinions, that those whom the world calls great are, when they sin, not to be spoken against, that their position bids us be tolerant to them. He denounced Herod as Elijah denounced Ahab, and a woman's anger slew him for it. He met his death because he was no reed to be shaken by the wind of the promises of a wicked king.

Resolve through life and death to be true to your convictions, to those things and thoughts which God Himself breathes into your soul—to be true to them in all companies high and low, in all emergencies dangerous to your fortune or otherwise. Resolve in all circumstances of life not to barter truth or moral right for anything in this world; resolve never to refrain your lips in silence which gives consent to wrong, or in that other silence which takes no notice of it. Moved in all by a great love of One who died for His plain speaking and plain dealing, keep true to the ideal of manhood which John afforded in this hour, which, in an infinitely nobler way, Christ wrought out for us in His life and sealed and delivered to us at His death. Be no reed shaken in the wind; be like the pine of a hundred winters, rock-rooted, steadfast in tempests, and dying only when it has done its work to the very last, in the place which God has given it to keep.

¶ If I am asked to surrender *convictions,* I cannot do it for any reward, nor for fear of any loss; these depend upon all I know of God; they are the things seen in the noon-day light of my soul; and I cannot pretend to submit my judgment in such things to wiser men or better men. It would be mock humility. I might just as readily, at their bidding, say that green is scarlet. It may be so; but if it be, my whole vision is deranged by which I have walked and lived, and

by which this world is beautiful. To say that I am ready for any martyrdom in the defence of my *convictions*, and that I cannot affect to have doubts or misgivings about them, is only to say that they *are* convictions.[1]

¶ A large contribution to the spread of Quakerism must be assigned to the constancy (or obstinacy, as their critics called it), the patience and courage with which Quakers faced persecution, and, above all, to their refusal to shun publicity and avoid danger. Their stubbornness, which seemed sheer fanaticism to those in authority, at least compelled outsiders to recognise and respect their sincerity. The following order to Justices of the Peace, taken from the Calendar of State Papers (Domestic), November 10, 1657, is instructive. 'His Highness and Council have lately received several addresses on behalf of Quakers imprisoned for not pulling off their hats, and for not finding sureties for good behaviour. *Some have long lain in prison, and are not likely to get out by conformity.* Though His Highness and Council are far from countenancing their mistaken principles and practices, yet as they mostly proceed rather from a spirit of error than a malicious opposition to authority, they are to be pitied and dealt with as persons under a strong delusion . . . divers having died in prison.'[2]

A Great Prophet.

Luke vii. 28.—'Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist.'

In His estimate of greatness, as they measure things in heaven, Christ uses the word 'prophet.' 'There hath not arisen a greater prophet than John the Baptist.' What did He mean by a prophet? Not one who predicts the future, but rather one who passionately and openly proclaims righteousness, and tries to win men over to it. Prophets had not existed only among the Jews. Socrates, who never thought of himself, but only of his cause, and died for it, was as true a prophet as Elijah, who in his crusade against royal wickedness incurred the murderous wrath of Jezebel. John the Baptist was as great as any other. Righteousness was his ruling passion. He cared nothing for comfort; his meat was the scanty and precarious subsistence of a solitary wanderer who cared not for comfort or appearance, or the jeering of the common average fool. He had courage of the highest order. Before Herod's court, dooming himself as he spoke to the vengeance of the queen, he denounced the adulterous marriage of the king. To soldiers he preached gentleness and contentment, to tax-gatherers fairness, to the average man self-denial. He cared not whom he offended, so that he delivered himself of his message. But where, probably, he rose above both Elijah and Socrates was in his self-effacement. A greater than he was coming after him—he knew it: he knew that he was about to be eclipsed, and he rejoiced—for the sake of the cause. 'He must increase,' he said, 'but I must decrease.' 'Who's shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.'

It is those two points in John the Baptist's character, his *fearlessness* and his *self-forgetfulness*, that we are to consider, because they are both rare virtues in our day, and virtues often misunderstood.

1. 'There was a man sent from God whose name was John' is the brief introduction given by his namesake, the Evangelist. The 'wonderful birth' of which our Collect speaks is recorded only by Luke; the other Evangelists begin with John the Baptist as a preacher of righteousness. Nearly four hundred years had passed away since Malachi, the 'seal of the prophets,' had foretold the coming of a new Elijah. Nearly four hundred years, and then, without warning or sign, the Jewish world is startled by the appearance in their midst of a hermit, one whose life had been in the desert solitudes, whose clothes and manner of living bore testimony to the severity of the discipline he practised. He came laden with a great message, stern, short, severe, uncompromising—'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand: prepare the way for the advent of the God and Judge.' Not an atom of respect or veneration had he for the respectable religion of his day. There was no open-mouthed gazing at the righteousness of the punctilious Pharisees—the strict and rigid students of the Law. There was nothing for them but the stern, half-incredulous rebuke, 'O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come. Bring forth,

[1] *Life and Letters of Frederick W. Robertson*, 369.
[2] H. G. Wood, *George Fox*, 86.

therefore, fruits meet for repentance.' What those fruits were the many inquirers were told in plain, practical language. For the people there was a lesson of charity. 'Give of your abundance to them that lack. He that hath two coats let him impart to him that hath none, and he that hath meat let him do likewise.' For the publicans, the men appointed to collect the tribute, there was a warning against exaction; for the soldiers a lesson of contentment, and a sharp censure of the high-handed conduct of men who were proud of their position in the service of Rome.

There was the same noble fearlessness whether the Baptist was witnessing against Pharisee, or soldier, or vicious king. It might cost him his life, as it did at last, but his was not the disposition to think of consequences when his conscience bade him speak. He had the utterly *reckless* way (as prudent men might call it) of speaking the truth with which he was charged of God, the holy recklessness of every true servant of God, who, when brought before rulers and kings, never forgets that higher tribunal before which he must some day stand. A great man once said, in his anxiety to support the powers that be, that nothing was so dangerous to a state as a man with a conscience. John was a man with a conscience. He dared to criticize iniquity in high places; he had the defiant energy of one who knows that God and right are on his side, though the world may be against him. And John the Baptist was a martyr because he was true to his conscience, because he dared to set the moral law above all else, and to rebuke even the highest in the land when they dared to violate that law.

2. But there was something else in John the Baptist's character as remarkable as his fearlessness, his boldness in rebuking vice, his readiness to suffer for the truth's sake. And that was his great humility and self-forgetfulness. It was his high commission to be the herald of the Incarnation. And his success as a messenger was wonderful. All classes thronged to his baptism; went forth to the wilderness to see that strange uncouth figure, and hear those fearless censures; recognized in him, after the silence of four hundred years, 'a prophet, and more than a prophet.' Men even began to ask, Is not this the Christ? His short ministry of two years and a half had actually roused the Jewish world from its lethargy. And this great revival was, as it seemed, all the work of one mission preacher. Surely, if he is not the Christ, he must be Elijah, or one of the prophets. At last, they dared to ask him who he was, and his answer comes clear and straightforward, as his message had been, 'I am not the Christ.' 'I am not that Prophet.' 'Who art thou then?' 'I am nothing, my message is everything. I am a voice. He who speaks by me is mightier than I. He is standing among you, though you know Him not. I am but the herald proclaiming the King's approach. He must increase; I must decrease. My work is done when all eyes are turned on Him whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.'

'I must decrease.' If it is hard to be fearless in defence of spiritual and moral truth, it is far harder to say, I must decrease. And yet it is the secret of real greatness everywhere that a great man lives for his work, not for himself. The work, the truth, the message, the great discovery—it is to that the life is dedicated, and if that prosper the man is content to die unknown. So great men like John win the greatness that they think not of, and those who seek it pass away and are forgotten.

Now those two things—fearlessness and forgetfulness—are twined and intertwined with one another. What is it that makes us so timid, so ready to hide a truth, explain it away, or water it down to meaninglessness? Isn't it generally because we can't help thinking about ourselves, and what people think of us? Ah! if I make too much of that I shall offend So-and-so. If I say, 'I believe that,' people will laugh, and it is so hard to be laughed at. Besides, I don't want to be singular. And so little by little we come to ask ourselves, not, What is truth? but, What truths can we safely profess without offending anybody? And yet we have only got to put it in this way to see that we are mere cowards all the time. We want to escape danger and win cheap glory. A soldier who fights with such a motive is nothing but a coward. Is it less true of the soldiers in the camp of God?

¶ I remember, years and years ago, hearing a sentence which has stuck in my mind ever since; and it's worth remembering: 'It is the fear of

God that makes men fearless, and the fear of man that makes men cowards.' [1]

¶ When Henry Martyn had completed his translation of the New Testament he determined to gain for it the approval of the Persian Court. But first he had to face the ordeal of an interview with the Shah's Vizier, without whose permission he could not gain access to the Shah. He attended the Vizier's levee bearing the precious Book. All eyes were turned on the solitary Frank. In that court where verbal swordsmanship was the art of arts, a discussion was inevitable, but Martyn knew that an angry discussion would ruin his chance of seeing the face of the Shah.

He could not prevent the very clash that he dreaded. 'There was a most intemperate and clamorous controversy kept up for an hour or two; eight or ten on one side and myself on the other.' He came unfriended; the Vizier encouraged the attack, and the veneer of polish was broken through as they set upon him.

'Their vulgarity in interrupting me in the middle of a speech; their utter ignorance of the nature of an argument; their impudent assertions about the law and the gospel, neither of which they had ever seen in their lives, moved my indignation a little.'

His indignation, but not his fear. This Martyn seems to have forgotten how to fear. The Vizier who had at first set them by the ears came up at last to the angry group, stilled the hubbub and put to Martyn before them all a crucial question. He challenged the stranger to recite the Moslem creed. 'Say God is God and Mohammed is the Prophet of God.'

It was an electric moment, the whole court at attention.

'I said, "God is God" but added, instead of "Mahomet is the prophet of God," "and Jesus is the Son of God."

They all rose up as if they would have torn me in pieces, snarling out one of the classic fighting cries of the Moslem world, "He is neither begotten nor begets." "What will you say when your tongue is burnt out for this blasphemy?"'

He heard them in silence.

'My book which I had brought expecting to present it to the king lay before Mirza Shufi, the Vizier. As they all rose up after him to go, some to the king and some away, I was afraid they would trample on the book; so I went in among them to take it up, and wrapped it in a towel before them; while they looked at it and me with supreme contempt.' [1]

[1] A. Moore, *God is Love*, 158.

Two Views of the World.

Luke vii. 33, 34.—'John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine. . . . The Son of man is come eating and drinking.'

Jesus Christ very seldom took any notice of the mists of calumny that drifted round Him. 'When he was reviled he reviled not again.' If ever He did allude to them it was for the sake of the people who were harming themselves by uttering the calumnies. So here, without the slightest trace of irritation, He quotes a malignant charge which was evidently in the popular mouth, and of which we should never have known if He had not repeated it; not in anger, but simply in order that He might point to the capricious inconsistency of finding fault with John and Himself on precisely opposite grounds. The former did not suit because he came neither eating nor drinking. Well, if His asceticism did not please, surely the geniality of a Christ who comes doing both will be hailed. But He is rejected like the other. What is the cause of this dislike that can look two different ways at once? Not the traits that it alleges, but something far deeper, a dislike to the heavenly wisdom of which John and Jesus were messengers. The children of wisdom would see that there was right in both courses; the children of folly would condemn them both. If the message is unwelcome, nothing that the messenger can say or do will be right.

The same kind of thing is common to-day. Never mind consistency, find fault with Christianity on all its sides, and with all its preachers, though you have to contradict yourself in doing so. Object to this man that he is too learned and doctrinal; to that one that he is too illiterate, and gives no food for thought; to this one that he is always thundering condemnation; to that one that he is always running over with love; to this one that he is perpetually harping upon duties; to that other one that he is up in the clouds, and forgets the tasks of daily life; to this one that he

[1] C. E. Padwick, *Henry Martyn*, 280.

is sensational; to that one that he is dull; and so on, and so on. The generation that liked neither piping nor mourning has its representatives still.

Our business now, however, is not with the inconsistency of the objectors to John and Jesus, but simply with the difference in their attitude to the world as expressed in the words of the text.

1. Notice, first, John's attitude to the world as indicated by his personal habit. 'John came eating no bread nor drinking wine.' No one ever saw John familiarly walking along the streets and lanes of Judæan villages or towns. No one ever saw John in the market-place or the synagogue. No one ever saw John guest at a dinner or a wedding feast. John cut himself clean off from the great world. He held himself aloof from the common life of men. He went and lived in the wilderness apart, alone. Now, why did John act like this? Not surely from idle whim. It was not from mere caprice that the greatest man born of woman turned his back upon the world. There must be deep and serious reason for action like this. What is it? You will find the reason in John's haunting and overwhelming sense of the world's corruption and sin. There are some shallow people in the world who turn a blind eye to all the world's sin and sorrow, its agony and shame, and then prate about everything being as it should be in the best possible of worlds. And they think that is being optimistic. It is not being 'optimistic.' It is simply being silly. The only optimism that is worth a straw is the optimism that has taken full account of all life's tragedies and sorrows and sins. Genuine optimism is calm and strong, but it is never gay and irresponsible. It does not ignore the bitter facts of life, but it believes that even out of the bitter good will come. If it were not paradoxical to say so, the optimist arrives at his optimism by way of pessimism. No man has a right to the title 'optimist' who has not had his heart crushed and wellnigh broken by the sins and sorrows of the world, and yet has come to a strong, calm faith that all things work together for good. The man who has never looked into the abyss, who has never felt the ache and burden of the world's sin, who has known nothing of a bleeding and broken heart, and who comes to us in his gay and irresponsible way and says, 'Let's be cheerful; this is a good world,' is not an optimist. He is simply an ignorant fool.

Now, John *had* looked into the abyss. He saw how terribly and fearfully wrong the world was. He saw how far men had wandered from God's ways. For him the whole head was sick and the whole heart faint. He saw the open and unabashed sin of publicans and sinners. He saw the no less terrible, though hidden, sin of scribes and Pharisees. He saw the very religion of the people turned into huge hypocrisy. And the awful, desperate tragedy of it all wellnigh broke John's heart. Far from thinking the world the best possible of worlds, John thought its case desperate and past mending. The iron entered his soul. As he thought of its misery and shame, the world to John seemed beyond hope of redemption. His message to men was, 'Escape from the wrath to come.' He severed himself from society, with all its corruption and sins. He left the world because he despaired of it.

He is not the only one who has turned pessimist at the vision of the world's sin. Elijah fled to Horeb and wanted to die because he felt Israel was hopelessly lost to God. The monks and hermits of the early centuries who, in their thousands, fled to the sandy deserts of Egypt and the caves of Asia Minor did so because they wished to escape the corruptions of a society which they despaired of redeeming. Savonarola betook himself to a convent because the wickedness of his day was so great that it seemed hopeless to contend against it. 'The whole world is overset,' he cried; 'there is none that doeth good, no, not one.' And the same pessimism—a far nobler and deeper thing than much that passes for optimism—had entered John's soul. He came eating no bread nor drinking wine. He cut himself off from the world because he despaired of it.

2. Now notice Christ's view of the world as indicated by His personal habit. 'The Son of man is come eating and drinking.' His habit was the precise opposite of John's. He lived and moved not in the solitary wilderness, but amid the busy haunts of men. He frequented the synagogue. He joined the crowds of pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem to the feasts. He was no stern ascetic; He was the genial friend and lover of men. He shared in their joy; He participated

in their sorrows; He took part in the common life of every-day men. 'The Son of man is come eating and drinking.' And this difference of habit runs down to a difference of belief and view. John despaired; Jesus hoped. John saw a corrupt world; Jesus saw a redeemable world.

Do not, however, imagine that Jesus was one of those shallow and flippant optimists who preserve their cheerfulness only by ignoring the hard and bitter side of life. There are three stages in men's views of the world. The first is that of a gay and irresponsible optimism—that is the stage of *ignorance*. The second is that of a deep and brooding pessimism, a pessimism created by the overwhelming vision of the world's misery and sin—that is the stage of *realism*. The third is that of a calm and sober and reasoned optimism, which ignores not one of the hard facts, and yet believes that good is at the end of it all—that is the stage of triumphant *faith*. Now John stopped at the second; but Jesus reached the third. Jesus saw as plainly as John did how terribly wrong the world was. He felt far more keenly than John could the awfulness of its wickedness and sin. And yet He did not despair. He looked *deeper* than John, and even in sin-stained man He saw possibilities of better things. He looked *higher* than John, and He knew that God could make the very wrath of men to praise Him. And so Jesus hoped for the world. Nay, He did more than hope. He had a calm and confident assurance that the world was a salvable world, that all its relations could be redeemed. And so Jesus did not turn His back upon the world. He lived in the midst of men to help and bless them. He lived in the midst of the world to cleanse and save it. 'The Son of man is come eating and drinking.' He did not ignore the sin; He did not overlook the corruption. He did not look at the world through coloured spectacles. He looked squarely at the wickedness, the depravity, the tangled and ghastly wrong that had made other men despair, and He said, 'This world can be redeemed; it is not the devil's world. It is God's world.' So it was in the midst of men that Jesus was found, labouring to bless them, toiling to purify human life, working for the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. 'The Son of man is come eating and drinking.'

Who is the optimist? Is he
  Who blandly smiles in face of all
The guile and greed and treachery
  That build for men a prison wall?—

Who never sheds a fleeting tear,
  Or feels the tremour in his throat;
Because long since he sealed his ear
  To sorrow's cold, discordant note?

Nay! he whose eyes with pain are blind,
  Who vainly struggles to resist
Fears for his faltering fellow-kind—
  He is the only optimist!

He mourns what is, because he knows,
  Thro' dauntless faith, what well might be;
His tears are but a flood that flows
  From heights of possibility.

No river springs but from the hill,
  No tear save from the soul's high slope.
Despair the spirit's vales may fill,
  Yet comes it from the heights of hope!

And he who most laments the bare,
  And boastful temper of the times,
Is he who most has breathed the air
  Within the purer upper climes—

Those upper climes where still, he knows,
  In spite of failures, he may scan,
Crowned with hope's sacramental snows,
  The deathless heritage of man.[1]

The Sinner's Friend.

Luke vii. 34.—'A friend of publicans and sinners.'

It was meant to be a slander: it is a blessed fact.

1. To prove it you have first of all the teaching of Christ Himself. Take the three great parables which follow each other in natural sequence: the parable of the Lost Sheep, the parable of the Lost Piece of Money, and the parable of the Lost Son. As you stand beside Jesus Christ and hear Him speaking these great parables, what is it you realize? You realize that all the love and the tenderness and the yearning and the pity of Jesus Christ are poured out upon the lost sheep, the lost piece of money, the lost son. The man had ninety and nine sheep

[1] G. Thomas, *The Wayside Altar*, 10.

safe, but what did that matter when he heard the one sheep bleating, lost in the night? The woman had nine pieces of silver; what matter, when one piece lay lost amid the rushes on the floor? Every rush had to be removed until she found it. The father had one son safe at home, but what did that matter when one son was away in the far country by the swine-troughs? There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth; there is joy in the presence of the angels of God. The prodigal comes back and there is music and dancing. How did He know all about it? How could He depict the prodigal? Only because He Himself had sat down beside the prodigal at the swine-trough. All the pity and all the yearning and all the tenderness of the Christ are poured out on the publican and the sinner.

2. Then you have the friends of Christ. What sort of people were they? There were men like James and John, men with narrow spirit, men who did not hesitate to ask Christ to bring down fire from heaven to consume a whole village because the village happened to be disrespectful; men such as Simon Peter, with fiery temper under imperfect control—a man who could use strange oaths and was acquainted with a species of sulphurous language—a man contemptible, save in that he was a good braggart. And if you go outside the circle of His immediate friends, who are the people by whose side He lingers? You see Him at a well-side, weary, tired, hungry, and there comes a woman that is an outlaw, who dares not go to the well when the other, the respectable, women go. She has to go alone in the heat of the day because she is ostracized. And there the weary wayfarer by the well speaks to her, and He makes to that outcast the first declaration that He is the Messiah—'I that speak unto thee am he.' Have you ever thought of the wonder of it? A woman such as that, and her ears blessed by hearing the first announcement that here was the long-desired of all nations come at last. What do you call a man who does things like that? Nothing else but a friend of sinners.

3. Or take another scene. He is on His journey, and He sees a man that is a publican up in a tree. The publican, we are told, was rich, and because he was rich we know that he was dishonest. That does not, of course, mean that every rich man is dishonest—what is meant is that when a publican in those days was rich he was dishonest, for only by dishonesty and extortion could he become rich. Christ sees him up in the tree, and He says to him, 'Make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house.' And you remember what they said?—'That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.' You can hear the cry of despair in their voices. They had hope about Him. He might be the Messiah, who knows? But it was all impossible now. He had gone to be a guest with a man who was a sinner.

4. But if you want to realize the truth of this saying, the greatest scene in which to realize it is the scene when the Lord sat at supper in the house of Simon the Pharisee. You remember about it? How, as He sat at meals, stretched in the Oriental attitude, there came in a woman who was a sinner, and she began to wash His feet with her tears. Have you ever thought how justified Simon the Pharisee was? Simon, when he saw the strange scene, said, 'This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.' What other conclusion could Simon the Pharisee come to? Put it to yourself. In similar circumstances would you have been any less scornful than Simon the Pharisee? Of course the explanation is simple—that Jesus had met her before; that at the sight of His face and the sound of His voice her spirit had leaped up, clasping again the long-lost purity, and that she came there expressing her repentance and wiping His feet with her tears. Simon the Pharisee did not know it; and as you consider it, is it not borne in upon you how these men are to be excused? How could they realize, as we can now realize, that this man was the friend of publicans and sinners?

5. And you remember the last scene of all, how His eyes closed in death just as He had lived, how, as He hung there upon the cross, not a single heart in the world now understanding or believing in Him, at His side He heard the voice saying, 'Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom,' and how He turned, and said, 'To-day

shalt thou be with me in paradise.' Almost the last words to issue upon the cross were words opening the gate of heaven to a crucified thief. Truly the words spoken in mockery have a glorious truth at their heart—Jesus Christ is the friend of publicans and sinners.

Are you following the footprints of Jesus? Have publicans and sinners any interest for you? There is a certain kind of interest abroad to-day which is in danger of becoming spurious and counterfeit. It goes by the name of 'charity.' There is no word that has been so demeaned, so degraded, and so materialized as this word 'charity.' It used to be a sweet and fragrant flower; now it is becoming a dried and common herb. Two hundred and fifty years ago the translators of our Scriptures penned these words, 'Now abideth faith, hope, and charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity.' Our Revisers have eliminated that word 'charity,' its meaning has become so thin and diluted, and they have substituted a word full of fragrance and beauty: 'Now abideth faith, hope, love, and the greatest of these is love.' Charity now-a-days has become almost synonymous with monetary aid, hence the richness of its meaning is gone. We talk about 'deserving objects of charity,' and by that we mean objects deserving of our monetary aid; but if that be the boundary of our charity we shall never touch the agony of life's pain. Mankind needs most help not in the hand but in the heart. Publicans and sinners are helped not so much by the money which puts them into a grander house as by the love which lifts them into a purer life. Zacchæus was chief among the publicans and he was rich, but he was a most deserving object of charity; Matthew was in an official position, sitting daily at the receipt of custom, but he was a most deserving object of charity.

¶ I was talking only a little while ago with the mayor of one of our Northern towns, and he told me this little story. He said he was one day going to the free library, and he encountered a young man who had just come out of prison, where he had been spending five years. He said, 'I spoke to him in a friendly, homely, affectionate way, "John, how are you?" just as if he had been returning from an excursion to the seaside. He hung his head and scarcely spoke. About six months afterwards I met him again in the same town, and again spoke kindly and affectionately to him, and just as I was leaving him he said, "Sir, I want to thank you for what you did for me six months ago." "What did I do?" "You spoke a kind word to me. I have been a better man ever since"; and that man is now a member of a Christian Church and doing good and Christly work.' Would it not be enough, then, just to say this: 'Go thou and do likewise'; crowd thy days with goodness, and when the Master calls thee home it may be thy blessedness to behold many sheaves from the harvest seed that thou hast planted.[1]

The Justification of Wisdom.

Luke vii. 35.—'Wisdom is justified of all her children.'

That is to say, those that are wise recognize the wise way of living. John's way was solitary, Christ's was social. The Jews criticized both. But the true child of wisdon will recognize that the Divine Wisdom was in both John and Jesus, and will accept both, and prove them true.

The two who were equally mocked and impartially set at naught stand to you and to me as the highest exemplars of Christian service and ministry. Each, we remember, bore witness to the other. To John the Lord was always the 'mightier than I.' To the Lord John the Baptist was more than a prophet, the greatest of them that till then had been born of women. And we shall do well to recognize the difference between the two types of ministry, the two methods of proceeding towards the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven, which was the common goal that each set himself to reach, even at the cost of life and liberty. The Lord in His infinite condescension towards the Baptist declined to put any slight upon John's ministry. 'Wisdom,' the Divine plan for the ordering of the Kingdom of Heaven, 'is justified,' He says, is pronounced right and reasonable, 'of all her children.' So it comes to this—does it not?—that we who profess and call ourselves Christ's servants cannot disregard either method. And the fact that both methods will arouse misunderstandings and incur reproof makes not the slightest difference to our obligation.

1. It is required, first, of all those who would

[1] J. H. Jowett.

help forward the Kingdom of God that they recognize that the gospel demands a strong and constant element of puritanism. So long as the world is the world—and alas! the world and the fashion of it show no great sign of passing away—so long it remains incumbent upon us to prepare for our work of witness, and for our perpetual insistence on the need of a remedy for sin, by a certain fixed and definite aloofness from human affairs. This is not to say that our only hope lies in monastic vows for our laymen, or perpetual celibacy for our clergy. But it is to say that we look to find our Christian households marked by a certain severity of purpose, a definite recognition of the superiority of the eternal over the temporal. We want the social intercourse of life, the pleasures and the relaxations of life, and the necessary business of life, and the inevitable worries of life, to be raised to a higher plane. The Scotch have a fine phrase with which to describe the man who lives days of toil and hours of ease as seeing Him who is invisible. They say of such a man that he is 'far ben,' that is to say, in the inner room of the 'house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' Even Herod could feel this with regard to the prisoner of Machaerus, and the Divine wisdom was thus justified of its child John the Baptist.

2. But, on the other hand, here is the social method of Jesus. And it is required that we bring into our habit of mind as Christian people a brave, unflinching element of sociableness. Jesus here chose the harder part, for the conduct of those who take that part can easily be misconceived, so that the gospel suffers loss. To us especially in these present days the same danger is peculiarly great. The Christian is being urged to rush in where political angels fear to tread. He is to be the judge and divider in all manner of fiscal and social disputes. The gospel, he is told, must come down from the heights into the arena, the dusty arena, of trade strife and class contention, and before he knows where he is he becomes what a witty man has called a Court Chaplain to King Demos. Nevertheless, the Master took all these risks because His main end, after all, was to be the Friend of those who most required His aid. All day long, at mealtimes and in between, through busy hours when there was not leisure so much as to eat, He gave His unstinted companionship to those who were forcing their way into the Kingdom of Heaven and taking the Kingdom by force. So the common people heard Him gladly; and the superior classes were at least never able to convict Him of partisan, political, or economic agitation. At the end of it all He could still state His principle without fear of any charge of inconsistency—'to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, to God the things that are God's.' And once more the Divine Wisdom was justified of its child. 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'

3. There are two practical lessons to be borne in mind.

One is that nothing is so fatal to the recognition of moral and religious truth as a scornful temper. Scornfulness blinds the eye of the soul with fatal completeness. Its telling epigrams, 'He hath a devil,' 'Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber,' may command a momentary applause, but they are dearly paid for. For the first condition of seeing truth, whether it be moral or intellectual truth, is patience; and a scornful epigram is the petulant rejection of patience; it is an effort to decide a difficult question by a method which assumes that the cry of insolent passion is the verdict of faith or the verdict of reason.

¶ His [Carlyle's] one ideal of life seems to be to tread down the 'rabble rout,' instead of to strain after any excellence above his own. Indeed, the thing which has struck me with most wonder in reading these letters, is that a man could *remain* so high-minded as Carlyle on the whole certainly did, and yet live so constantly in the atmosphere of scorn—scorn certainly more or less for himself as well as every one else, but especially for every one else, his own clan excepted. He spends all his energies in a sort of vivid passion of scorn. He tramples furiously partly on himself and partly on the miserable generation of his fellow-men, and then he is lost in wonder and vexation that such trampling results in no great work of genius. It was not, of course, till he found subjects for genuine admiration—which he seems to have been long in doing—that he discovered subjects for his creative genius at all.

On the whole, this picturesque life of Carlyle

in his earlier years—and a more vivid life I cannot imagine—impresses me profoundly with the belief that the prophetic side of his mind hardly existed; that he was a man of very rare genius, who had not so much a message to his fellow-men, which he was prompted by love for them to deliver, as a haunting vision of the exceeding emptiness of the commoner forms of human life, and who was brimful of the scorn which that emptiness deserved —which scorn the intensity of his own imagination compelled him to embody in words. But of grave desire to redeem mankind by persuading them to accept even this message, of passionate craving to find others possessed with the same creed, of eager spiritual sympathy with those who preached anything at all analogous to it—and there were many contemporaries who did so—I can find no trace at all. Therefore I deny Carlyle the name of a prophet.[1]

And, secondly, wisdom may, and must, be won by prayer. It is the first of the seven gifts of that Holy Spirit whom God the Father gives to those that ask Him. This general body, stock, and spirit of truth, which makes dependent truths plain, and so justifies them to our understanding, this power of insight into saintly character through sympathy with its determining motive—this is given now as of old to those who sincerely ask for it. 'Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting get understanding.' . . . 'She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace; a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.'

If thou criest after knowledge,
And liftest up thy voice for understanding;
If thou seekest her as silver,
And searchest for her as for hid treasures;
Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord,
And find the knowledge of God.
For the Lord giveth wisdom:
Out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

[1] R. H. Hutton, *Contemporary Thought and Thinkers* i. 32, 44.

The Meal in Simon's House.

Luke vii. 36—'And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.'

Some of the most exquisite stories in the Gospels are told us only by Luke. And, among these, the story of the woman that was a sinner is unsurpassed in tenderness and beauty.

There was a Pharisee named Simon, and one day he asked Jesus to a meal in his house. Now Simon was not a scheming enemy, but a friend of a cold sort, and none too civil. However, Jesus went in and sat, or rather lay, down; for they did not sit on chairs as we do, but lay across broad couches, so that His feet were clear on the side of the couch away from the table. Then came in a woman that was a sinner in the city. People often do come in from the street without offence in the East; but it was a bold thing for a woman and a well-known sinner to come into a Pharisee's house. However, she brought a box of ointment, and stood over Christ's feet to anoint them; but instead of doing this she burst into tears of passionate repentance. Then she did a thing that some of Simon's friends would have thought as bad as any of her sins. She let down her hair, though it was thought disgraceful for a woman to be seen with her hair down, and dried his feet with it. So she remained, kissing them and anointing them with ointment.

When Simon saw this penitent at the feet of Jesus, 'he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner.' The more righteous Jesus was, the more was He bound, according to the Pharisee's code, to keep the sinner at a distance; the nearer to God in the privilege and prerogative of His prophetic office, the more His dignity demanded that He should exalt Himself above the profane. Simon would not have suffered such a woman to touch *him:* if he had met her in the street, he would have held himself far aloof. Yet *he* made no pretensions to be a prophet; and there were many in the land no less righteous than he. But 'this man' was said to be the Messiah, and yet He suffered this sinful creature to embrace His feet! Simon's inference was that Jesus did

not know who or what she was, and therefore could not have the prophetic insight.

Our Lord answered not his words—for he had not spoken—but his *thought*. 'Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee.' This must have carried home what He said with a wonderful force. 'This man,' Simon had said to himself, '*if* he were a prophet, would have known.' That doubt at least is solved. He was a prophet, for He had heard the unspoken whisper of Simon's own heart.

'Simon, I have something to say to thee.' 'Say on, Rabbi.' 'A money-lender had two debtors, and one owed him ten times as much as the other. As they could not pay, he freely forgave them both. Which then of them will love him more?' Not a very interesting question for Simon: however, 'I suppose,' said he, 'the one to whom he forgave more.' 'Quite right,' answered the Lord; for Simon had fairly convicted himself. Then Jesus turned round to the woman, and said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman?' Then He told Simon how she had done for Him all the duties of common civility which Simon had neglected, and something more. Simon had given him no water to wash His feet—a necessity in countries where only sandals are worn—but she had washed them with her tears, and had dried them with her hair. Simon should have given Him the kiss of peace, and he might have done it on the hand if he had wanted to be very civil indeed; but she had never ceased passionately to kiss His feet. Simon had not anointed His head even with common oil, as the custom was; but she had anointed His feet with costly ointment. 'Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins have been forgiven—those many sins you are thinking of—for she loveth much; but he to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.'

'Who is this that forgiveth sins also?' So Simon's friends said to each other, at these words of Jesus. Is the emphasis of that word 'also' usually noted? Let it be considered, and it will be found to be full of meaning. Jesus had done many wonderful things. He had healed lepers, cast out devils, given sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf; nay, He was said even to have raised a dead man from his bier. But, though Simon and his friends had heard of these things, not all these wonders so impressed them, and so filled their souls with awe, as, sitting with Him at the meal, to hear Him say to a sinful woman, 'Thy sins are forgiven.' Their souls were thrilled with something deeper than awe, as, looking from one to another, they lifted up their hands, and whispered, 'Who is this—what manner of man—that forgiveth sins *also?* Is He man, or more than man? or what is He?'

The point of the parable is not that the debtor was forgiven because he loved his creditor, but that he will love him after he is forgiven; the point of the next words is not that he who loves little will get little forgiveness, but that he who is forgiven only a little will not love much; and the point of our Lord's last words to the woman is that her faith has saved her, not her love. In every case the forgiveness comes first, and after it the love. Our Lord means that love is not the cause of forgiveness, but the sign by which we know it. He reasons thus—you know that her sins are many; yet you see that her love is great. How can this be, unless her sins have been forgiven? Forgiveness is needed to account for her change from a state of sin to a state of love.

And so it is with all of us. We are told indeed to work out our own salvation, but never to work out our forgiveness. *That* is given once for all in Christ already, forgiveness full and free; so that it is too late to bargain about it with God, even if we sinners had something to offer for it. Yet this is the inveterate mistake of the natural man. He will not simply take his forgiveness, but looks about for something to buy it with. He is ashamed to appear before God in the nakedness of sin, so he puts on some decent rags of his own righteousness—there are plenty of them in the devil's wardrobe. When God calls him, he answers that he is really not fit to come just now; but when he has done a reasonable part of the work himself, he will come to God to get it finished. Now the beauty of this is that he never does manage to do any part of the work himself; and it is the merest delusion to fancy that he can. The Pharisees of all ages have tried that plan, and it has never answered. Even Saul of Tarsus could not work it.

Once for all let us get rid of the Pharisee's idea that forgiveness is a thing to be won by toil.

It is not the far-away goal of the Christian life, but the gracious gift with which we start—a gift whose fullness unfolds through love in righteousness and peace and joy, as fast as we are able to bear the glory it reveals. In our own strength we can do nothing; but forgiveness fills our souls with the love that overcometh all things.

God gives his child upon his slate a sum—
To find eternity in hours and years;
With both sides covered, back the child doth come,
His dim eyes swollen with shed and unshed tears;
God smiles, wipes clean the upper side and nether,
And says, 'Now, dear, we'll do the sum together!'[1]

The Woman that was a Sinner.

Luke vii. 37—'And, behold, a woman in the city which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment.'

Who was this 'woman in the city'? With a singular consent Christian antiquity, Christian poetry, Christian art, replies myriad-tongued, 'It was Mary Magdalene; it was she out of whom seven devils were cast; it was she who stood at the foot of the cross and at the sepulchre, weeping.' And, further, with less of unanimity they reply, 'It was Mary the sister of Lazarus.' The one argument which supports this latter identification is apparent. John says plainly, in speaking of Mary of Bethany, 'It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair.' Now it must be confessed that the use of a past tense (first aorist) here would be strong evidence, by itself, that John was referring to some past anointing familiar to his readers from other sources. But the only anointing mentioned in the two first Gospels is clearly the same as with that *subsequently* recorded by John. What remains then, but to identify the Mary of John xi. 2 with the woman of Luke vii. 37? Thus there does appear from the text itself some reason (though not sufficient reason) for supposing that this sinner was actually the sister of Lazarus.

[1] George Ma cdonald

Much more curious is her popular identification with Mary Magdalene, because it is due not to anything in the text of Scripture, but to a sentiment—a sentiment which seems to have been universal, which is certainly true and beautiful in itself, but which has led to the confounding of two utterly distinct characters. That Mary Magdalene was one out of whom seven devils had been cast is to *us*, with our keen perception of the physical characteristics of 'possession,' proof positive that she was not the same as the pardoned harlot, that her very misfortune had made such a life impossible. That she was so generally believed to be the same shows how soon the typical and (so to speak) evangelical aspect of the casting out of devils obscured the literal; how instinctively the dispossession of these evil spirits came to be regarded as the symbol of our deliverance from the thraldom of lusts and passions.

If this, however, be a doubtful gain, it is quite otherwise with the confusion between the harlot and Mary of Bethany. One must surely have lost all perception of what is true to woman's nature to tolerate the idea that the sister of Lazarus, who had nothing of the passion, nothing of the self-consciousness, of the penitent about her, could have been such an one as the woman in the city. The serenity and quiet piety of that home, as pictured by John, and the esteem in which the sisters were held by 'the Jews' at the time of their brother's death, make it certain that it never had been the scene of so terrible an upheaval as the fall of the younger sister would have caused. And still more hardly could we imagine that, if she had been such, it would have been written that Jesus 'loved Martha, *and her sister*, and Lazarus.' God forbid that we should derogate aught from the exceeding love with which Christ both forestalled and met the love of the penitent sinner; but in His human friendships, in the personal affection which, as man, He had for the beloved disciple and for the three of Bethany, He surely looked (as the best of us in our measure look) for what was purest, sweetest, most unstained, in man or woman. In this case, therefore, a more true *sentiment* has guided us to a right conclusion, even as a more accurate criticism has in the other case.

No, who she was we know not at all. All that is told of her is comprised in this story. The sinful woman is shown here, casting herself in deepest penitence at the feet of Jesus, and finding, then and there, full mercy and rich comfort from His love.

Are you living? . . . Are you lonely? . . .
Leave your world awhile and hark.
One there is at least, who loved you—
You—his lily of the dark.

Never mind tho' dead men deem you
Outcast—stand in God's own light:
Have you sorrow for your sinning?
Then your soul is spotless, white.[1]

1. It was, probably, not a great many hours before that the news had for the first time resounded through that town that the Prophet of Nazareth and His disciples were entering its gates. In no quarter of the town had this intelligence been received with keener interest than in that of which this woman was an inhabitant. Already Jesus was known as the 'friend of publicans and sinners.' He had not refused to eat and drink with those whom it was usual to classify as such. He had called a publican from his desk to be enrolled among His chosen disciples. Whilst His personal goodness and unblameableness shone with purest lustre, His benignity appeared to flow forth most graciously toward those whom the reputed godly of the Pharisee world most of all despised—the prodigal, the ignorant, the degraded. Whilst no doctor of the law could expound, no Rabbi teach, like Him, He sought not to display His wisdom to the learned, or to charm and impress the great, but made it His business to teach the lowliest and the least instructed. Here, then, was a wonder of wonders for the publican and the sinner. Heretofore righteousness and austerity had ever gone together; *they* at least had not known them apart. They had known no righteousness which was not *self*-righteous; what was regarded as godliness had worn to them a stern and repulsive aspect. Now they heard of One compared with whose holiness the legal morality of the most esteemed among the Pharisees was but a meagre pretence, yet who manifested in all His conduct a kindness and condescension such as won all hearts but those of the proud and the harsh. And this winning holiness used winning words of wisdom, such as found a way into the dullest minds and darkest consciences. No marvel was it, then, that nothing was at this time so much talked of among publicans and sinners as this strange and rare conjunction of qualities in Jesus of Nazareth.

In some the news awakened the hope of deliverance from a miserable bondage of which they had often felt the burden, who yet, not knowing whither to look for help, had straightway plunged the deeper into their sins. The 'woman that was a sinner' was one of them. This was her opportunity. She hastened to find her way to Jesus, and soon was in the midst of the crowd that surrounded Him. Nearer and nearer she pressed. There were no Pharisees in that close throng. It would be beneath their dignity; and, besides, by close contact with 'this people that knoweth not the law' their holiness would be defiled. So, without encountering frown or malediction, the poor woman pressed on till she came within clear sight and distinct hearing of Jesus.

It is hardly possible to measure the strength of the barriers which failed to keep her out. *We* know the enormous potency of social barriers which make a rich man's threshold as impassable to the uninvited poor as the flame-defended gate of Eden to exiled Adam. But there were in her case religious barriers quite as strong, comparatively unknown to us. Had she touched one of the other guests, instead of Jesus, no doubt he would have felt obliged to leave the meal untasted, to go home and change his clothes and bathe himself, and still remain unclean awhile, ere he was purged from the taint of that pollution. This she knew and felt, and under any other circumstances would have shrunk into any corner to escape their scornful eyes, would have crept aside like some beaten animal which seeks to hide itself from sight and notice. But on this day all fear or regard of human opinion left her, or, rather, was swallowed up in an overmastering desire. This one thing she knew, that Jesus was there; this one thing felt, that she must get at Him, must show Him her devotion, must win from Him, if it were possible, a word of pardon and peace.

[1] E Sandford, *Mad Moments*, 8.

A mournful figure, in a scene of gladness,
Passes alone and silent through the crowd;
Unheeding all, her dark eyes filled with sadness,
Her form by humble, heartfelt sorrow bowed;—
Longing to lay her burden at His feet
Where sins repented full forgiveness meet.

At last she sees the One long sought, her Master,
And, undeterred by others' scoffs and jeers,
Breaks o'er His feet her box of alabaster,
While swiftly flow her penitential tears.
The odour of the ointment fills the room,
Worthy of Him she loves—a rare perfume. [1]

2. She stood behind Him weeping. Unrestrained and passionate indeed must have been her weeping! No lightly-passing shower of April skies, but the full downpouring of the lowering swollen clouds of autumn. And surely we have here a tacit reproof to those who look coldly (as some do) upon anything passionate—exaggerated, they would say—in the expression of religious emotion. Had they been there, would they not have said (with some truth, too) that her display of affection was very 'earthly'; that she had but turned upon another and higher Object the unrestrained feelings of her former life? Might they not have bid her enter into her closet and weep there, rather than make that show before the eyes of men? To these possible objections our Lord silently but emphatically replies by receiving and commending every circumstance of her passionate service to Himself. Let her weep her heart out; let her kiss her heart out upon His sacred feet. The safeguard of love towards our dear Lord is not to be found in cold restraints, or in warnings to be 'spiritual': it is to be found in Him. He only, who is God most holy, can receive with perfect safety, without the possibility of harm, the utmost warmth of the most passionate affection.

It is sometimes cast as a reproach upon the more devout Christianity of the day that it is 'anthropomorphic' in faith and worship. It is not answered so distinctly and directly as it ought to be—that our faith and worship must be essentially 'anthropomorphic,' because it centres about Him who 'was found in fashion as a man.' Be it that God in Himself is 'unknowable' (as they say); we know the Father in the Son, and the Son we know as Christ Jesus; and no man was ever so thoroughly 'knowable' as Jesus, because no man was ever so absolutely consistent with himself. It is in strict dependence upon this principle that we maintain that in our religious worship all pure human emotions, however passionate, are rightly and laudably directed upon the God-man whom we know, and, knowing, love and adore.

¶ There is an exquisite picture of the contrition of a soiled soul in *Robert Falconer*. Falconer is reading the story of the Magdalene to a company of sinners. 'Some one sobbed again. It was a young slender girl, with a face disfigured by smallpox, and, save for the tearful look it wore, poor and expressionless. Falconer said something gentle to her. "Will He ever come again?" she sobbed. "Who?" said Falconer. "Him—Jesus Christ. I've heard tell, I think, that He was to come again some day." "Why do you ask?" "Because," she said, with a fresh burst of tears, which rendered the words that followed unintelligible. But she recovered herself in a few moments, and, as if finishing her sentence, put her hand up to her poor, thin, colourless hair, and said, *"My hair ain't long enough to wipe His feet."*' [1]

3. Wonderful and gracious were the words now falling from the lips of Jesus. The Speaker was He who said, 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. . . . Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.' 'I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance,' 'to seek and to save that which was lost.' 'They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick.' It was He who taught that 'there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.' It was He who spake the parable of the Prodigal Son. It was He who wept over Jerusalem. He showed a way of escape, near at hand, for every sinner; He testified of the pitifulness and tender mercy of the Father to all who turn to Him; in words of all but irresistible pathos and love, He proclaimed Himself as sent from the Father to bring sinners back to God. Such was the preaching which the case of the sinful woman required.

[1] M. Hitchin-Kemp, *The Ideal of Sympathy*, 22.

[1] *Expository Times*, xviii 226.

But yet the Saviour had not spoken to her personally. Till this was done her heart could not rest. Her mourning could not end, though the bitterness and agony of her grief were removed. Her heart could not be fully reassured, nor could she confidently take her place among the pardoned and renewed, until the Master's voice should have proclaimed her accepted.

We can think of no higher blessing than that which the Lord pronounced on her—Go, and enter into peace; thy faith hath saved thee—and that is the blessing He gives to every sinner who truly turns to Him.

She sat and wept beside His feet; the weight
Of sin oppress'd her heart; for all the blame,
And the poor malice of the worldly shame,
To her was past, extinct, and out of date:

Only the sin remained,—the leprous state;
She would be melted by the heat of love,
By fires far fiercer than are blown to prove
And purge the silver ore adulterate.

She sat and wept, and with her untress'd hair
Still wiped the feet she was so blest to touch;
And He wiped off the soiling of despair
From her sweet soul, because she loved so much.

I am a sinner full of doubts and fears,—
Make me a humble thing of love and tears![1]

Simon the Pharisee.

Luke vii 40.—'Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee.'

We must not suppose on account of the words which Jesus sometimes spoke to the Pharisees that every Pharisee was surrounded by a cloud of censure. The Pharisee in Jerusalem seems a very modern type of man. Probably that is because men, in certain conditions of life, become cosmopolitan, and so are easily recognized by the world at large. The Pharisee was a man of severe and upright integrity. And one thing that had grown in the soil of the whole race of Pharisees was a hatred of sentimentalism. They had learned that manifestations of feeling were often insincere, so they had drawn themselves up and said that life was not to manifest itself in any outbursts of emotion. There were certain duties, and whoever did those, in simple, cold austerity and accuracy, should be accepted as the pattern man. They had learned to be indignant at the way in which, very often, men of soft hearts, and not of earnest consciences, had sentimentalized about sin; so that as soon as a man fell into great wickedness, or a criminal found himself under arrest and awaiting punishment, these men poured out lavish pity, and seemed to have some sort of admiration for the way in which the sinner had set the law at defiance. We can see the danger into which the Pharisee would necessarily fall. Despising sentimentalism, he would come by and by to despise all the nobler sentiments, confusing sentiment with sentimentalism. Thus he would narrow the possibilities of righteousness. He would come to think righteous only those who could do the things which were possible to the lower natures. The Pharisee had violated very few commandments. He had kept the laws that came down from Moses, and he had added a multitude of laws and had kept these also. The trouble with him was that he never had any enterprising desire to help other men and bring sinners back from their sinfulness. His was a religion of hard justice; and that religion of justice must necessarily narrow itself and deal with external things. It was a case of what we so often find—an evil that comes from a perversion of what is right. From hating mere sentimentality, the Pharisees had come to occupy the position in which they stood when Jesus found them.

Men are always cutting their lives into halves. We have seen this in theology. Theology, in former times, was divided into two separate parts called 'justice' and 'love.' There was supposed to be a certain conflict between these two; and then some adjustment of this by what was called the 'plan of salvation.' But we have come to think more wisely. We have come to see that justice, standing alone, would be unjust. And on the other side, we see that love, working entirely by itself, and having no deep standards of righteousness, would not really be love. Only that love which is rooted in justice, only that justice which is intent on the salvation of mankind, can realize the nature of God; and such justice and such love are identical with one another. Justice is but the full exercise of any complete nature in its completeness. For God to leave the sinner in his

[1] Hartley Coleridge

sin unhelped would be unjust. Love beams upon every page of the Gospels and shines from every look of Jesus Christ. Let us not try to separate the justice and the love of God. It is love that brings us our punishment; it is justice that brings us our salvation. The complete God gives Himself entirely in the Incarnation for the entire salvation of His poor child who has fallen into sin.

1. Where did Simon break down?

(1) He was perfectly self-satisfied—a man on faultlessly good terms with himself. It was a sense of superiority that had caused this scanty hospitality towards Christ. There was a consciousness of his own superior discernment, as well as a righteous self-exclusion from the touch of a defiling hand, in the inward thoughts that the Saviour discerned: 'This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.' He seemed to have no thought that any point in his character could be marked out for reproof as he gave the haughty reply, 'Master, say on,' to the Saviour's word, 'I have somewhat to say unto thee.' There did not lurk in his breast the faintest suspicion that he could be hinted at in our Lord's brief parable of the Two Debtors when he calmly and almost superciliously answered, to the question who loved most, 'I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most.'

(2) This led him to feel a secret contempt for enthusiasm, and horror instead of pity for the woman that was a sinner; he utterly failed to understand the overmastering love which did not wrap itself in its own integrity, but went out to seek and to save that which was lost.

And so, he loved little; he was good to a certain point, but he did not go far enough; he needed conviction of sin as much as the outcast and the sinner; he needed his heart to be smitten with the Cross, as Moses smote the rock, that streams of love and pity might flow forth; he needed ringing in his ears the scathing rebuke, 'Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor and blind, and naked'; and then he would have fallen at Jesus' feet—and, for aught we know, he may at last have fallen at Jesus' feet—with the cry, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner'; he would have known that much was being forgiven him, and he would have loved much.

Self-boasting *Pharisee!* how blinde
A judge wert thou, and how unkinde!
It was impossible, that thou,
Who wert all false should'st true grief know.
Is't just to judge her faithful tears
By that foul rheum thy false eye wears?

'This woman,' say'st thou, *'is a sinner!'*
And sate there none such at thy dinner?
Go Leper, go! wash till thy flesh
Comes like a childe's, spotless and fresh;
He is still leprous that still paints:
Who saint themselves, they are no saints.[1]

2. It may be that some of us have great difficulty in realizing that we are sinners; if so, let us be sure that Jesus gives us the same chance as He gave Simon; He does not spare the rebuke if it will soften the heart. And there are three things we must do.

(1) We must remember that it is by the mercy of Christ that we are saved from being what we might have been. 'There goes John Bradford, but for the grace of God,' said a good man when he saw a criminal being led to execution. We are too apt to take credit to ourselves for our circumstances. Imagine that you were born of poor parents out of work in Whitechapel, and had to pick up your living in the docks, or that you were a working girl in Bethnal Green, trying to keep your poor parents or nurse a sick brother out of making match-boxes at 2¼d. a gross; and then thank God you are spared the temptations which they have to undergo.

(2) Again, we must remember that sins of the spirit are quite as bad in the eyes of Christ as sins of the flesh; He never spoke a hard word of the publican and sinner, but He lashed with His scorn the 'scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.' The sins that we respectable people commit lightly every day, sins of pride and indolence and indifference to the sufferings of the poor, may be worse in His sight than the most flagrant sins of those who know no better.

¶ Christ Himself seems not to have been afraid of the sins of the flesh, but to have shown His severity against the sins of the world. Would

[1] Henry Vaughan

it be rash to follow His example? We can all see the havoc wrought by impurity and intemperance, and there are plenty of rich respectable people, chaste and moderate by instinct, who are ready to join in what are called crusades against them. But as long as sins do not menace health or prosperity or comfort, we easily and glibly condone them. As long as Christian teachers pursue wealth and preferment, indulge ambition, seek the society of the respectable, practise pharisaical virtues, we are not likely to draw much nearer to the ideals of Christ.[1]

(3) And, thirdly, we must remember that there are not two gospels, one for the rich and the other for the poor, but one for rich and poor alike, and that only one narrow path leads to salvation, and that is the narrow path which winds up to the Cross. Let us get well within view of the Cross; let us ask the Holy Spirit to bring home to us the Cross; let us say to ourselves, 'It was *my* pride, conceit, and sloth that helped to nail Him to the tree'; let us pray for the spirit of grace and supplication, that 'we may mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son,' and, we shall know that much is being forgiven us, and we shall love much.

Not these appal
The soul tip-toeing to belief:
The ribald call,
The last black anguish of the thief;

The fellowship
Of publican and Pharisee,
The harlot's lip
Passionate with humility;

Or the feet kissed
By her who was the Magdalen—
The sensualist
Is one among a world of men!

Oh, I can look
Upon another's drama; read
As in a book
Things unrelated to my need;

Give faith's assent
To that abysmal love outpoured—
But why was rent
Thy seamless coat for *me*, dear Lord?

[1] A. C. Benson, *The Silent Isle*, 52.

Why didst Thou bow
Thy bleeding brows for *my* heart's good?
How shall I now
Reach to the mystic hardihood

Where I can take
For personal treasure all Thy loss,
When for my sake,
My sake, Thou didst endure the cross?

For my soul's worth
Was 'It is finished!' loudly cried?
For me the birth,
The sorrows of the Crucified?[1]

[1] Theodore Maynard, *Folly*, 66.

Reception and Rejection.

Luke vii. 44.—'And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman?'

In these words we have the reception of the woman and the rejection of the Pharisee. Why?

1. The Pharisee had no true faith in Christ; the woman had. 'And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.' Why the Pharisee invited Christ into his house does not appear. Carlyle said that if Christ had visited London, Monckton Milnes would have asked Him to breakfast. The poet was so fond of inviting all sorts of distinguished people to his table, caring little as to the particular nature of their distinction. Perhaps the Pharisee had a similar passion for coming into contact with the famous. Whatever may have been the motive, it is evident that Simon had no genuine faith in his guest. The thirty-ninth verse shows that he did not believe in Christ as a prophet: '*If* he were a prophet.' Simon thought that Christ was lacking in insight; yet this was precisely what he himself lacked. He had sight, and could see the woman that was a sinner: Christ had insight, and could see the woman that was a conscious sinner, a penitent sinner, a pardoned sinner. Simon certainly did not believe in Christ as a Saviour. He had no notion of needing a Saviour. He could see the woman that was a sinner, but he had never seen the man that was a sinner, although he had so often looked into the glass. And not having known himself as a sinner, it was impossible for him to understand the glorious grace of Jesus Christ. Simon failed altogether to

comprehend the true grandeur of his guest, and doubted Him whilst he entertained Him.

On the other hand, the woman's reception is that of sterling faith. She was a sinner, and she knew it. In presence of Christ's awful goodness she realized her personal unworthiness. His words had touched her better nature, aroused her conscience, bowed her to the dust. Precious, indeed, is such grief! Legend says that the pearls of the sea are the tears that our first parents shed at the Fall; but more precious than all pearls are the tears of a godly contrition, for they win again the paradise we lost. Christ was a Saviour, and the woman knew it. She had insight too, and knew Christ to be the Saviour of the lost—knew Him to be her Saviour. Her sin put her far from Christ, but she felt the drawing, uplifting grace. The beautiful plant that had long been trailing and bleeding in the dust found a strong and gracious support by which to climb into the glory of the upper air. Christ therefore said to her, 'Thy faith hath saved thee.' True, she never spoke a word the whole time; yet it is equally true that she witnessed a good confession before many witnesses. Her tears, salutations, and sacrifice were equivalent to the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and every other creed in which the Christian world has sought to express its faith. She believed in Christ with all her heart—in His mercy, His merit, His might; and her faith was counted unto her for righteousness.

2. The Pharisee had no true love for Christ; the woman had. The whole emphasis of the story is laid on this. We are shown the stiff, frozen, pompous dignity of the man, his condescending airs, the supercilious tone in which he addresses Jesus. He has either forgotten, or more likely purposely omitted, those graceful acts of courtesy by which it was the custom to show welcome to an honoured visitor. There had been no kiss, no water for the feet, no anointing oil. This particular guest was not sufficiently distinguished to call for such attention. Jesus must deem Himself highly honoured by being allowed any place at all at the great man's table. The great man had given Him a wonderful lift-up by inviting Him. Evidently that was what he thought. And evidently he was essentially vulgar. To treat any invited guest whatsoever with that studied neglect would have proved him wanting in all fine feeling, but to do it to Jesus showed something more than bad breeding. It showed an utter want of moral perception; it showed that he had no eyes for goodness, purity, and spiritual beauty. To him there was nothing attractive in Jesus, nothing that touched his heart, because it was a blind, unfeeling, cold, stony heart, incapable of loving greatly anything except himself. This man was just a lump of stiff, haughty, polished selfishness. That was what Jesus saw in him.

But the woman, whatever she had been, had still a soul that was alive, and a heart that could see and feel. As soon as she saw the Lord and heard His voice, she was drawn to Him. She was drawn to His goodness, though it made her feel more deeply the sin that was in her. He was so pitiful, so tender, so infinitely kind, that to look into His face was like new life. That face created in her a world of glad and grateful emotions. It filled her with strange new hopes, it spoke to her of forgiveness. It whispered to her possibilities of a better life. It was music, sunshine, and very heaven. Oh how she loved! All the channels of her devotion were opened to pour worship and honour at His feet. She forgot herself and the place and the guests and everything else as she knelt to kiss His feet and wash them with her tears in a great abandonment of love. And verily in loving Him thus she proved that she was far nearer to sanctity and heaven than the other.

> Ah, if the love, the love be deep,
> How little all beside appears!
> The richest ointments are so cheap,
> Beside the costly tears.[1]

3. The Pharisee made no real sacrifices for Christ; the woman did. 'I entered into thine house.' Does not Christ here assert Himself? 'I'—majestic personality! Simon, altogether failing to recognize this greatness, did the very least for his glorious guest. But the woman received Christ with a self-renouncing heart. She 'brought an alabaster box.' She gave Him the costliest, loveliest, sweetest thing she had. We never receive Christ truly until we give Him our best.

Is there not to-day much religion that breathes

[1] F. Langbridge, *Little Tapers*, 16.

little of the spirit of sacrifice and consecration? Nothing really is given up for Christ's sake; nothing in substance, time, popularity, or feeling. We justly measure the value of all things by the degree of sacrifice which enters into them. Even in trade this principle unconsciously asserts itself. The pearl is so precious because the diver has put his life into peril to secure it. The orchid is so costly because the explorer has dared dangerous forests and swamps to possess it. The diamond is reserved for the king's crown because its recovery from the secret mine involved untold effort and sacrifice. So all through the catalogue of costliest things. And in the social world this principle asserts itself even more distinctly. We hold lightly the cheap courtesies of conventional life; we begin to esteem attentions, actions, gifts, as they imply thought, effort, and denial on the part of him who offers them. Motherhood glows into the sublimest relation because it implies the largest sacrifice. And surely this thought must come into religion. Our discipleship becomes significant as it involves somewhat of the infinitely self-renouncing spirit of our Master. What are we prepared to endure, to give, to effect in the cause of our Lord and for the love of our Lord? The religion that costs nothing is worth exactly what it costs.

¶ The badness of the good comes out in the Pharisee. Simon was outwardly the righteous one. Accepted by the people as such, flattered by himself as such, yet how much coldness, artificiality, and heartlessness was evinced by him! He thought himself gold, and yet the Trier of hearts revealed him as utterly loveless—that is, utterly worthless. Let me not mistake the whiteness of whitewash for the whiteness of the great white throne.

The goodness of the bad is suggested by the woman. Judging by appearances, she was one to be shunned, and yet in her heart the spirit of true holiness was dawning.

The goodness which begins in deep sorrow for sin, which discovers the beauty of the Lord and trusts in Him, which demonstrates its genuineness in a new self-sacrificing life, is infinitely better than the social etiquette or ecclesiastical propriety which knows nothing of the love of God or man.[1]

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *The Gates of Dawn*, 174.

What though thine arm hath conquered in the fight,—
What though the vanquished yield unto thy sway,
Or riches garnered pave thy golden way,—
Not therefore hast thou gained the sovran height
Of man's nobility! No halo's light
From these shall round thee shed its sacred ray;
If these be all thy joy—then dark thy day,
And darker still thy swift approaching night!

But if in thee more truly than in others
Hath dwelt love's charity;—if by thine aid
Others have passed above thee, and if thou,
Though victor, yieldest victory to thy brothers,
Though conquering conquered, and a vassal made,—
Then take thy crown, well mayst thou wear it now.[1]

Forgiveness and Love.

Luke vii. 47.—'I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.'

THE account here given of the woman who was a sinner, and the short parable with which it is conjoined, yields to no other passage of Scripture in the cheering, encouraging manner in which it illustrates the graciousness of God's forgiveness. The true nature of forgiveness of sin is well expressed in a line of the hymn, 'Rock of Ages,' 'Save me from its guilt and power.' A subsequent line of the same hymn, 'Nothing in my hand I bring,' well corresponds to these words of our Lord: 'When they had not wherewith to pay, he forgave them both.' There is good cause for the hymn having become a very favourite one, for none breathes more devoutly the aspiration for this, God's greatest blessing.

There are two difficulties on the surface of these words; but a little consideration of them helps to make more plain the lesson of the whole story.

1. It strikes us, first, in the parable that the love of men to God seems to be represented as depending upon the amount which they have been forgiven. 'Tell me, which of them will love

[1] S. Waddington.

Him most?' Is, then, the power to love God with all the heart, the greatest of all graces and blessings, reserved for those who have sinned against Him most deeply? As the Apostle asked, are we invited to sin that grace may abound? To that question we can only give the answer which he gave, 'God forbid!' The parable *cannot* mean that.

The error comes indeed from our asking, as we so often do, of the parable more than a parable can give us. No such similitude can give us a *full* reflection of life and truth. It can give, it purposes to give, *one side,* one aspect. It can touch one point. The closest tie of love to God is to be found in the sense of forgiveness. The more truly men feel that they have been forgiven, the more truly and deeply will they love. It is a measurement not of sin, but of the *sense* of sin. That was where Simon went wrong. He failed to read aright the poor woman's motive and attitude and the Saviour's toleration of her. He compared her life with his own. Hers was stained with patent sin. His was orderly and, to the outward eye, free from reproach. What he saw was true, undeniable; but there was something he did not see. That was not the only difference between them. The parable and the words which follow explain the other difference.

The woman's conscience had been touched. She had listened at some time to the gracious words, the pure and searching, but tender and pitiful words, of the Saviour. They had 'shown her all the mercy, for they taught her all the sin.' Though she would have hesitated to say that she was forgiven, she felt that she might draw near to Him, and her whole heart went out to meet His compassion. She saw nothing else, feared nothing else, valued nothing else. Her only thought was how she could show her boundless gratitude and unspeakable reverence. She had still, in spite of her past sin, the simple heart of natural feeling.

The Pharisee, though he had come some way to meet the Saviour, though he called Him 'Master,' 'Teacher,' had yet not learnt the first lesson of the Kingdom of Heaven. His was not the heart of a little child. Even his hospitality lacked the fullness, the simplicity, the heart that it should have had. His thoughts were not on the Great Teacher, not on his own shortcomings. He was measuring himself with others. Our Lord's words allowed the truth of what was true in his thought. There *was* greater guilt on her side. It was natural, if she felt that, that she should love more. The lesson in words was not carried further. It is, as with a parable always, not the whole truth at once. But it was surely meant to start other thoughts in his mind, to set him looking at things from another side. 'All these things have I kept from my youth up,' so he was saying to himself. Was that a perfect picture of the truth? Had he nothing in his secret history which should bring him to his knees by the side of that poor sinner? When the account was summed by an all-seeing Judge, when opportunity, temptation, 'what was resisted,' as well as what was done, was 'computed,' was there that full difference of the 500 and the 50 pence in the debt? And what was the difference on the other side, in the sense of the sin, in the simple responsive heart welcoming the infinite graciousness of God's message?

Are there any people anywhere who have little to be forgiven? The question answers itself. Just as beneath a stronger power of vision than we possess the finest silk would look like sackcloth, so the life that is outwardly purest is all marred with imperfection and sin when seen in the light of God. If Simon knew himself as God knew him, he would have found that he too, as well as this woman of the city, had much to be forgiven.

One of the most striking proofs of this truth is the fact that in every age it is the greatest saints who have been most conscious of their sin. Paul, with his lowly words, 'Of whom I am chief'; St. Augustine in his *Confessions;* Catherine of Siena, whose life seemed as pure as a white lily, but whose acknowledgment of sin sounds almost exaggerated to our ears; Charles Simeon of Cambridge, writing in his diary, 'Lord, make me to know the vileness of my own heart'—these are the types of saintly experience in every age. The nearer to God a man lives, the more he will discover he has to be forgiven. As the light shines more and more fully upon us the more will it reveal 'the vileness of our own hearts.'

2. The other difficulty is in the other half of our text: 'Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much.' These words have been taken

sometimes as though they meant that the sins were forgiven *because* she loved much—that her love, in other words, was a set-off to her sin.

A moment's thought will remove the apparent difficulty. The conjunction 'for' is used in our language, as well as in the Greek, with two opposite meanings. We say, for example, 'The snow will melt, for the wind is in the south'; in which case we clearly mean the warm south wind is the cause of the snow's melting. On the other hand, we say, 'The weather will be fine, for the glass has risen'; but no one imagines the rising of the glass is the cause of the expected fine day. We mean that the rising of the glass is the effect and sign of the weather being fine. It is in this latter sense that Christ used the word 'for' in our text. He meant that the love of the forgiven woman was the effect and sign, not the cause, of her forgiveness.

For forgiveness is not a solitary gift. It is the beginning of a new life, a centre from which life and light radiate, a germ which exists not so much for itself as for what it produces. It brings assurance of a friendship that is of infinite value; it imparts a reliance upon God as our God, teaching us to count upon Him, exhibiting to us His hitherto unthought-of goodness. It pervades the soul with new and exhilarating sensations, and fills it with new desires and purposes. Therefore the gospel does not directly say 'love,' but 'believe.' Trust in Christ as willing to forgive. Bring to Him your empty, ruined, ungodly, unloving spirit, and have it healed, filled, renewed. Act upon what you at present know—that He makes provision in His own Person and work for sinful men. Humbly appeal to Him with such penitence and with such earnestness as you have; and as you open your spirit more and more to His influence, and find increasingly how complete you are in Him, your love will grow. It may not be of the passionate type awakened in this woman by the visible presence of the Lord, but it will be sound enough to urge you to serve and to please Him. The character of the love we bear Him must be different in some respects from that which those felt who saw His loving expression of face, and heard their forgiveness pronounced by His own lips; but it cannot be impossible or unlikely that we should learn truly and deeply to love Him who alone brings into our life the fruitful and happy expectation of endless purity and love, who alone gives us assurance that this life is anything better than a short and uneasy dream. Can we fail to love Him whose love for us is, after all, almost the only fixed and sure thing we can count upon? Can we fail to love Him to whom we must be indebted for as great a forgiveness as was this woman?

¶ When Cromwell lay dying, his soul was visited with doubts and fears. 'Tell me,' he said to one of the chaplains at his bedside, 'is it possible to fall from grace?' 'No, it is not possible,' said the minister. 'Then,' said the dying Protector, 'I am safe, for I know that I was once in grace.' Ah! but we want some better assurance than a theologian's argument; and Cromwell, dying, found it in these truer words, 'I think I am the poorest wretch that lives; but I love God; or rather, am beloved of God.' That is the sufficient stay.[1]

Dear Lord, *there was a certain Creditor*—
Thou knowest who, and who His debtor was,
And is, and ever so shall be, because
He who hath much forgiven, yet o'er and o'er
Goes on, and draws from out His boundless store
Of mercy; blasts not, no, nor overawes
With all the dreadful beauty of His laws;
Saying only, *Love Me, child, I ask no more.*

Go on, O Lord, love Thine unworthy one,
And give me will and power to love Thee; yet
Forgive not that, but multiply the debt,
Still owing, still to owe, and still to owe,
Thou sweetest Creditor, on yet, and on,
A sum whose total I shall never know.[2]

Evolution and Christ.

Luke vii. 49.—'Who is this?

When we consider the relations of the Evolutionary hypothesis to Christianity we do not touch the heart of the problem until we examine its explanation of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. If mechanical evolution can give an adequate and satisfactory explanation of the phenomena in question, it will have completed the explanation of the facts of life; and, by proving itself adequate to the explanation of the supreme

[1] G. H. Rendall, *Charterhouse Sermons*, 118.

[2] Emily Hickey, *Later Poems*, 55

and chiefest Type in the highest realm of being, will amply vindicate its claim to rational acceptance.

In combating the mechanical theory which has usurped the name of Evolution, and which has directly affected all thought hostile to the claims of Christ—not to speak of its indirect and evil influence upon very many thinkers who personally are humble and devout Christians—we do not attack the fact of evolution. We only assail a form which is rapidly being forgotten in the higher circles of thought, and which is unsupported by the ascertained facts of modern science. Evolution is a fact which, rightly interpreted, finds its highest confirmation in the teaching and life of the Lord Jesus Christ: and it is of the very highest importance to religious thought as giving the key to many perplexing phenomena of Christianity. Indeed, it reveals Christianity as the very crown and apex of the Divine purpose in creation.

Let us observe exactly what the facts are which must be explained by any tenable world-view.

The Person of the Lord Jesus Christ stands out from the records of the past as the unique Figure of human history. There is no reasonable doubt of the fact that, by virtue of His influence upon succeeding ages, He is the greatest of earth's sons. 'If we estimate the greatness of a man by his influence upon mankind, there can be no question that even from the secular point of view Christ is much the greatest Man who has ever lived.'[1] Hence, in taking the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ as the supreme test of the various theories presented to us by modern thought, we are true to the basal principle of the evolutionary hypothesis which bids us look for the explanation of any series of phenomena in its highest example. What are the supreme facts which have to be explained in connection with the Person of Christ? What is the secret of the influence which He has exerted upon the destinies of mankind?

1. We must start from the fact of His relative and perfect holiness. No teacher has ever been so unscrupulously attacked, no political leader pursued with such bitter enmity, no man has ever been so minutely scrutinized by fault-finding critics as the Son of Man, and yet His moral and spiritual grandeur has extorted the homage of even His bitterest enemies. Voltaire and Rousseau vie with John Wesley in the honour which they pay to His moral eminence; Mill, Renan—all generous-minded unbelievers of the last century—gladly acknowledge the moral supremacy of the Lord of Glory. Schmiedel admits that 'the spiritual greatness of Jesus and the imposing character of His Personality' render it difficult to deny the reality of all His marvellous works. To His goodness Mr. Lecky ascribes His enduring influence, and assures us that, amid all the crimes and superstitions which (he justly says) have defaced the Church, it has preserved an enduring principle of regeneration in the character of its Founder.

2. But the fact of the relative holiness of the Lord Jesus Christ is not the greatest fact which emerges from our study; there is the greater fact that, so far as sinful man can see, His character is absolutely perfect. Nineteen centuries of Christian history have passed, and, apart from faith in a Divine Lord, apart from the environment which He has created, no character has arisen to challenge the persistent truth of Sir John Seeley's statement that in all antiquity there are scarcely two or three characters who loved Good for its own sake, and can, therefore, justly be called holy. More than this, every succeeding age has only added to the laurels of the Lord Jesus Christ. His teaching, so far as it is ethical, has received an ever-increasing commendation from those who reject His gospel. It has never, taken in its context, been fairly charged with defectiveness, and no charge of positive moral error is ever seriously laid against it. Hence, we have the remarkable phenomenon of a Man who has not only lived the Ideal Life, but has also set the Ideal Standard of Morality.

¶ No one has yet discovered the word Jesus ought not to have said, none suggested the better word He might have said. No action of His has shocked our moral sense; none has fallen short of the ideal. He is full of surprises, but they are all the surprises of perfection. You are never amazed, one day by His greatness, the next by His littleness. You are ever amazed that He is incomparably better than you could have expected. He is tender without being weak, strong without

[1] G. J. Romanes.

being coarse, lowly without being servile. He has conviction without intolerance, enthusiasm without fanaticism, holiness without Pharisaism, passion without prejudice. This Man alone never made a false step, never struck a jarring note. His life alone moved on those high levels where local limitations are transcended and the absolute Law of Moral Beauty prevails. It was life at its highest.[1]

3. There is another related fact of the greatest importance—the Lord Jesus Christ conceived Himself to be sinless. The challenge, 'Which of you convinceth me of sin?' is one which no other teacher has ever dared to give. It has echoed throughout the ages, and the Faith of Christ stands or falls with it. The greatest saints of history are the very men who have been most conscious of personal demerit, and who have realized most intensely their bloodguiltiness before God. A hardened sinner accepts the Atonement as a matter of course, and never recks that sin is a terrible thing; but a saint groans: 'O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' But the Lord Jesus Christ never gives utterance to such a sentiment. The consciousness of personal demerit is not apparent in His teaching or actions. He does not pray for forgiveness from sin. He prays as One who, on equal terms, shares the holiness of God. Hence we must add to the facts of which an adequate explanation must be given the fact of His total lack of the consciousness of sin—or, better still, of His consciousness of absolute Personal holiness.

4. There is another fact of which no reasonable naturalistic explanation has ever been given—the Saviour's consciousness of His Divine Sonship or Deity. There is no reasonable doubt that the Lord Jesus Christ claimed functions which we can designate only as Divine. He claims, even in the days of His humiliation, a superangelic authority to forgive sins—and, be it remembered, this power, unlike that of the modern sacrificing priest who has corrupted the faith of the gospel by the introduction of the errors of paganism, is not derivative but personal and inherent. As the Father in heaven has power to forgive sins, so also has the Son of Man power on earth to forgive sins. Similarly, He claims the prerogative of Final Judgment which is to take place on the basis of relationship of the individual to Himself. Such claims as these conclusively show that the Master conceived Himself as Divine in the very highest sense of the word. This is the great fact which confronts us with the great dilemma—either God or bad. No third solution is possible to us. Either the Saviour is what He claims to be or else He is the Arch-deceiver of history. He is either 'the Truth' or the Lie of human history.

¶ Christ either deceived mankind by conscious fraud, or He was himself deluded and self-deceived, or he was Divine. There is no getting out of this trilemma. It is inexorable.[1]

[1] Ian Maclaren, *The Mind of the Master*.

Go in Peace.

Luke vii. 50.—'Go in peace.'

We find that our Lord twice, and twice only, employs this form of sending away those who had received benefits from His hand. On both occasions the words were addressed to women: once to this woman, who was a sinner, and who was gibbeted by the contempt of the Pharisee in whose house the Lord was; and once to that poor sufferer who, in the hope of getting healing, stretched out a wasted hand and touched the hem of His garment. In both cases there is great tenderness; in the latter case even more so than in the former, for there He addressed the tremulous invalid as 'daughter.' In both cases there is the hint of a very remarkable connection between faith and peace: 'Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace.'

Now, there are two things in these words.

1. The woman was dismissed. Christ said 'Go.' So He says to us, if we have been saved by our faith, 'Go!' And He intends two things thereby.

(1) First, He means to teach us that it is good for us to stand by ourselves, to feel responsibility for the ordering of our lives, not to have a visible Presence at our sides to fall back upon, but to grow by solitude. There is no better way of growing reliant, of becoming independent of circumstances, and in the depths of our own hearts being

[1] J. Duncan, *Colloquia Peripatetica*, 109.

calm, than to be deprived of visible stay and support, and thus to draw closer and closer to our unseen Companion, and lean harder and heavier upon Him. 'It is expedient for you that I go away.' For solitude and self-reliance founded upon self-distrust and reliance upon Him are the things that make men and women strong. So, if ever Christ carries us into the desert; if ever He leaves us forsaken and alone, as we think; if ever He seems—sometimes He does with some people, but it is only seeming—to withdraw Himself from us, it is all for the one purpose—that we may grow to be mature men and women, not always children, depending upon go-carts, and nurses' hands and leading-strings. Go, and alone with Christ realize by faith that you are not alone. Christian men and women, have you learnt that lesson—to be able to do without anybody and anything because your whole hearts are filled, and your courage is braced up and strengthened, by the thought that the absent Christ is the present Christ?

(2) There is another reason for which this separation of the new disciple from Jesus was apparently so mercilessly and perpetually enforced. At the very moment when one would think it would have done this woman good to be with the Lord for a little while longer, she is sent out into the harshly judging world. Yes, that is always the way by which Christian men and women who have received the blessing of salvation through faith can retain it, and serve Him—by going out among men and doing their work there. If the woman had been a centre of evil, she was to go back to the very place where she had been such, and there to be a centre of good. She was to contradict her past by her present, which would explain itself when she said she had been with Jesus. For the very same reason for which to one man who sought to be with Him He said, 'No, no; go away home and tell your friends what great things God has done for you,' He said to this woman, and He says to you and me, 'Go and witness for Me.' Communion with Him is blessed, and it is meant to issue in service for Him. 'Let us make here three tabernacles,' said the Apostle: and there is scarcely need for the parenthetical comment, 'not knowing what he said.' But there was a demoniac boy down there with the rest of the disciples, and they had been trying in vain to free him from the incubus that possessed him. And as long as that melancholy case was appealing to the sympathy and help of the transfigured Christ, it was no time to stop on the Mount. Although Moses and Elias were there, and the voice from God was there, and the Shekinah cloud was there, all was to be left, that He might go down and do the work of helping a poor struggling child. So Jesus Christ says to us, 'Go, and remember that work is the end of emotion, and that to do the Master's will in the world is the surest way to realize His presence.'

¶ The sages tell us that 'knowledge is power,' but the knowledge must be put into action. There may be room in the world to-day for those who know how things should be done, but there is much more room for those who are willing to do them. 'I dream dreams,' said Raphael, 'and see visions.' That is good, but he added something which was better still: 'I dream dreams and see visions, and then I paint my dreams and my visions.' He translated his ideals into action. The words of Sir Wilfred Grenfell are worth remembering. He says, 'Whether we, our neighbour, or God is the judge, absolutely the only value of our "religious" life to ourselves or to anyone is what it fits us for and enables us to do.' Christianity is not a mere thing of the emotions: it does not find its highest expression in pious phrases and cheap sentiments. It simply has no use for the people who are for ever talking about their religion without attempting to live it. Service is within the reach of all and is demanded of all.[1]

2. She was sent into peace. It is not 'Go in peace,' as our Authorized Version has it, but 'Go into peace,' and that is a great deal more than the other. 'Go in peace' refers to the momentary emotion; 'Go into peace' seems, as it were, to open the door of a great palace, to let down the barrier on the borders of a land and to send one away upon a journey through all the extent of that blessed country. Jesus Christ takes up this, as He does a great many very ordinary conventional forms, and puts a meaning into it. Eli had said to Hannah, 'Go into peace.' Nathan had said to David, 'Go into peace.' But Eli and Nathan could only wish that it might be so; their

[1] C. F. Walpole, *The Building of Personality*, 87.

wish had no power to realize itself. Christ takes the water of the conventional salutation and turns it into the wine of a real gift. When He says, 'Go into peace,' He puts the individual into the peace which He wishes him, and His word is like a living creature, and fulfils itself.

So He says to each of us: 'If you have been saved by faith, I open the door of this great palace. I admit you across the boundaries of this great country. I give you all possible forms of peace for yours.' Peace with God—that is the foundation of all—then peace with ourselves, so that our inmost nature need no longer be torn in pieces by contending emotions. 'I dare not' waiting upon 'I would,' and 'I ought' and 'I will' being in continual and internecine conflict; but heart and will, and calmed conscience, and satisfied desires, and pure affections, and lofty emotions being all drawn together into one great wave by the attraction of His love, as the moon draws the heaped waters of the ocean round the world. So our souls at rest in God may be at peace within themselves. That is the only way by which the discords of the heart can be tuned to one key, can come into harmony and concord; the only way by which wars and tumults within the soul can be turned into tranquil energy, and into peace which is not stagnation, but rather a mightier force than was ever developed when the soul was cleft by discordant desires.

In like manner, the man who is at peace with God, and consequently with himself, is in relations of harmony with all things and with all events. 'All things are yours, if ye are Christ's.' 'The stars in their courses fought against Sisera,' because Sisera was fighting against God; and all creatures, and all events, are at enmity with the man who is in antagonism and enmity to Him who is Lord of them all. But if we have peace with God, and peace with ourselves, then, as Job says, 'Thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field; and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee.' 'Thy faith hath saved thee; go into peace.'

¶ All the frictions, all the uncertainties, all the ills, the sufferings, the fears, the forebodings, the perplexities of life come to us because we are out of harmony with the divine order of things. They will continue to come as long as we so live. Rowing against the tide is hard and uncertain. To go with the tide and thus take advantage of the working of a great natural force is safe and easy. To come into the conscious, vital realization of our oneness with the Infinite Life and Power is to come into the current of this divine sequence. Coming thus into harmony with the Infinite, brings us in turn into harmony with all about us, into harmony with the life of the heavens, into harmony with all the universe. And above all, it brings us into harmony with ourselves, so that body, soul, and mind become perfectly harmonized, and when this is so, life becomes full and complete.[1]

The Twelve.

Luke viii. 1.—'The twelve were with him.'

At a very early period of His ministry Jesus began to gather round Him a company of disciples with a view to the preparation of an agency for carrying on the work of the Divine Kingdom. The two pairs of brothers received their call at the commencement of the first Galilean ministry, in which the first act was the selection of Capernaum by the sea-side as the centre of operations and ordinary place of abode. And when we think what they were called to, we see that the call could not come too soon. The Twelve were to be Christ's witnesses in the world after He Himself had left it; it was to be their peculiar duty to give to the world a faithful record of their Master's words and deeds, a just image of His character, a true reflection of His spirit. This service obviously could be rendered only by persons who had been, as nearly as possible, eye-witnesses and servants of the Incarnate Word from the beginning. While, therefore, except in the cases of Peter, James, John, Andrew, and Matthew, we have no particulars in the Gospels respecting the calls of those who afterwards became Apostles, we must assume that they all occurred in the first year of the Saviour's public ministry.

That these calls were given with conscious reference to an ulterior end, the Apostleship, appears from the remarkable terms in which the earliest of them was expressed. 'Follow me,' said Jesus to the fishermen of Bethsaida, 'and I will make you fishers of men.' These words (whose

[1] Ralph Waldo Trine, *In Tune with the Infinite*, 217.

originality stamps them as a genuine saying of Jesus) show that the great Founder of the faith desired not only to have disciples, but to have about Him men whom He might train to make disciples of others: to cast the net of Divine truth into the sea of the world, and to land on the shores of the Divine Kingdom a great multitude of believing souls. Both from His words and from His actions we can see that He attached supreme importance to that part of His work which consisted in training the Twelve. In the intercessory prayer, for example, He speaks of the training He had given these men as if it had been the principal part of His own earthly ministry. Such, in one sense, it really was. The careful, painstaking education of the disciples secured that the Teacher's influence on the world should be permanent; that His Kingdom should be founded on the rock of deep and indestructible convictions in the minds of the few, not on the shifting sands of superficial evanescent impressions on the minds of the many. But for the Twelve, the doctrine, the works, and the image of Jesus might have perished from human remembrance, nothing remaining but a vague mythical tradition, of no historical value, and of little practical influence.

1. It plainly behoved those on whom so much depended to possess very extraordinary qualifications. The mirrors must be finely polished that are designed to reflect the image of Christ! The apostles of the Christian religion must be men of rare spiritual endowment. It is a catholic religion, intended for all nations; therefore its apostles must be free from Jewish narrowness, and have sympathies wide as the world. It is a spiritual religion, destined ere long to antiquate Jewish ceremonialism; therefore its apostles must be emancipated in conscience from the yoke of ordinances. It is a religion, once more, which is to proclaim the Cross—previously an instrument of cruelty and a badge of infamy—as the hope of the world's redemption, and the symbol of all that is noble and heroic in conduct; therefore its heralds must be superior to all conventional notions of human and Divine dignity, capable of glorying in the cross of Christ, and willing to bear a cross themselves. The apostolic character, in short, must combine freedom of conscience, enlargement of heart, enlightenment of mind, and all in the superlative degree.

2. The Apostles' training for their work deserves special notice. It is often assumed that the Twelve were illiterate fishermen. And it is perfectly true that they had never learned; but only in the sense in which the same fact was true of their Master. That is to say, they had never sat, like Paul, at the feet of Gamaliel; or studied, like Apollos, in one of the great schools; or acquired, like Luke the beloved physician, the culture of letters which adorns his style; and hence they are described in the language of the people, as 'unlearned and ignorant men.' But their ordinary education at home, and in connection with the synagogue, had been well looked after, so that they were capable of doing efficient work both as pioneers of the gospel and as organizers of the Church. They were all preachers, some of them in the front rank; and several of them wrote books which have survived the ravages of time, and are still read with interest and with profit.

But it is when we think of their special training as disciples of Christ that we see at once they must take rank among the best educated of all theological students. The question is sometimes asked: What is the use of sending young men to college to study for the ministry, when the Apostles who founded the Church were just unlearned fishermen? The question suggests that a specially trained ministry is a departure from Christ's ideal. But it reveals an imperfect appreciation of facts and a particularly unintelligent reading of the New Testament. The average theological student spends three or four years in the Hall or College of his Church. He may have previously attended a university for the purpose of acquiring a general culture such as he would find helpful in any walk of life; and in that respect alone he may have an advantage over the Apostles. But when it comes to his special studies as a minister of the gospel, the advantage is all in favour of the twelve.

For three-and-a-half years—not winter sessions—these men studied Christian theology at the Fountain-head, drinking it in from the lips of the greatest Teacher who ever taught the words of truth and life. Moreover, in all their pastoral

labours and itinerant preaching they had the advantage of His methods and of His personal superintendence. But more than all this, they could see Him at work, they could hear Him in prayer, they could look into His eyes so eloquent with love, they could listen to the very heart-beat of His bosom and, bringing their own souls into touch with the magnetic force of His soul, could draw therefrom a spiritual vitality and nerve which neither difficulty, danger, nor death itself could quell.

3. The thoroughness of their training is emphasized by the fact that, on becoming followers of Christ, the Twelve had to forsake their worldly avocations. This is an essential feature in their case. Jesus Himself had laid aside His tools; and He asks the Twelve to follow His example in this matter. He had three reasons for asking them to take this step. First, He was calling them to a life of faith, and He wished them to realize that in giving up all for God they would lose nothing that was necessary to their life. Second, He wanted to impress them with the fact that religion is the supreme business of life. The man who spends his life in fishing and nothing else does not live. The man who never does anything else but make his daily bread in the tax office does not work. Every man's life-work ought to be over and above his means of livelihood. He gets that by the way. His Father will see to that, if the man but serve in all his life the interests of religion. Third, He knew that the spiritual work to which He was calling them would require the whole of their time and the whole working force of both body and brain. The successful propagation of Christianity is not the leisure-hour recreation that some have deemed it. There is no work more exhausting, no work which calls for better preparation, no work which demands that the whole man—physical, mental, and moral—shall be in better form.

4. With all their imperfections, which were both numerous and great, these humble fishermen of Galilee had, at the very outset of their career, one grand distinguishing virtue, which, though it may co-exist with many defects, is the certain forerunner of ultimate high attainment. They were animated by a devotion to Jesus and to the Divine Kingdom which made them capable of any sacrifice. Believing Him who bade them follow Him to be the Christ, come to set up God's Kingdom on earth, they 'straightway' left their nets and joined His company, to be thenceforth His constant companions in all His wanderings. The act was acknowledged by Jesus Himself to be meritorious; and we cannot, without injustice, seek to disparage it, by ascribing to it as its motive idleness, discontent, or ambition. The gospel narrative shows that the four brethren were not idle, but hard-working, industrious men. Neither were they discontented, if for no other reason than that they had no cause for discontent. The family of James and John, at least, seems to have been in circumstances of comfort; for Mark relates that, when called by Jesus, they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after Him. But ambition—had it no place among their motives? Well, we must admit that the Twelve, and especially James and John, were by no means free from it. But to whatever extent ambition may have influenced their conduct at a later period, it was not the motive which determined them to leave their nets. Ambition needs a temptation: it does not join a cause which is obscure and struggling, and whose success is doubtful; it strikes in when success is assured, and when the movement it patronizes is on the eve of its glorification. The cause of Jesus had not got to that stage yet.

One charge only can be brought against those men, and it can be brought with truth, and without doing their memory any harm. They were *enthusiasts:* their hearts were fired, and, as an unbelieving world might say, their heads were turned, by a dream about a Divine Kingdom to be set up in Israel, with Jesus of Nazareth for its King. That dream possessed them and imperiously ruled over their minds, and shaped their destinies, compelling them, like Abraham, to leave their kindred and their country, and go forth on what might well appear beforehand to be a fool's errand. Well for the world that they were possessed by the idea of the Kingdom! For it was no fool's errand on which they went forth, leaving their nets behind. The Kingdom they sought turned out to be as real as the land of Canaan, though not altogether such as they had

imagined. The fishermen of Galilee did become fishers of men on a most extensive scale, and, by the help of God, gathered many souls into the Church of such as should be saved. In a sense they are casting their nets into the sea of the world still, and, by their testimony to Jesus in Gospel and Epistle, are bringing multitudes to become disciples of Him among whose first followers they had the happiness to be numbered.

¶ The author of *Ecce Homo* said that 'no virtue is safe without enthusiasm.' There must be inward fires if we are to have dynamic driving power sufficient to overbear the drift of the world. Lost heat is lost power. When your Christian life cools within you, when the fires burn low, you begin to lose power. And lost power within you means so much more likelihood that the swirl of evil tides will lap the sides of your frail craft and softly bear you away. Let no man dare to call it cant, it is tested truth, that we all need the powers and fires of Christ in our heart to keep us safe and nerve us for the long battle. Go —let us say it to each other—go and renew those sacred fires of love and burning purpose. From that Divine source comes the dynamic that can make us men.[1]

Mary Magdalene.

Luke viii. 2.—'Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils.'

St. Luke's narrative is conspicuous for its frequent reference to the prominent position occupied by women in the beginnings of the Church. It is he who tells us most of what we know of the mother of our Lord; he alone who speaks of Elisabeth and Anna, and Joanna and Susanna; he who so simply and beautifully pictures the characters of Mary and Martha of Bethany; and he who in his later treatise mentions the presence of women in the upper chamber with the Apostles, commemorates the charity of Dorcas, and the hospitality of Mary the mother of Mark. He, too, records the opening of Lydia's heart, the conversion of the pythoness which led to the imprisonment of Paul at Philippi, and the quiet teaching of Priscilla who expounded to Apollos the way of God more perfectly. Lastly, it is he who tells us of the four daughters of Philip the evangelist, who did prophesy, thus illustrating the fulfilment of the Pentecostal prophecy of Joel, which promised the pouring out of the Spirit on daughters as well as sons, and the calling of the 'handmaidens' to holy work.

But of all the women celebrated in the history of the early Church, perhaps there is none so interesting, as surely there was but one so honoured, as Mary Magdalene. She is often mentioned by the sacred writers, who all record her deeds of love and watchfulness; but only once, so to speak, do we hear her voice. John, in his account of the Resurrection morning, tells us of the only words of hers which are preserved. Our first attention is demanded by her life and acts, for they too are eloquent. Her name has sometimes been deemed to indicate that her birthplace was Magdala, or Migdol as it is in O.T. form, one of the many Migdols or watch-towers of which we read in the Holy Land. And some have identified this Migdol with the village still bearing the name of El Medjel, which stands high above the western shore of Gennesaret.

So far as human memory is concerned, the fate of this noble woman is very hard indeed. We have no more right to be unjust to the dead, who cannot defend themselves, than to the living, who can; and we have to clear our minds of the saddest stuff daring to call itself history or religion that ever passed for the reality of fact or the reverence of faith, before we can look her in the face, or know in the least what manner of woman she was. Her name is associated with a personal ill-fame that has not a particle of evidence in the Bible to support or suggest it, and that, in the face of what we *are* told of her, is to the last degree incredible. By the wild guess of some obscure commentator she was once identified with the sinful woman in Simon's house, of whom we read in the preceding chapter, and from that beginning it has come to pass that 'Magdalen,' means a woman reclaimed from a life of profligacy. For such a use of Mary's name there is not a shadow of justification. There is no suggestion of a wanton life in what we are told of her, and none in the early Fathers who write so much about the gospel story. Origen, in the third century, is the first to mention the existence of such a conjecture, but dismisses it with scorn as a shameful

[1] R. E. Welsh, *Man to Man*, 106.

and baseless slander. Origen is followed by the whole succession of expositors in the Eastern Church (Theophilus of Antioch, Macarius, Chrysostom, Theophylact). In the Latin Church the identification of Mary with the woman who was a sinner was held as at best doubtful (Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine). Never, perhaps, has a figment so utterly baseless obtained so wide an acceptance as that which we connect with the name of the penitent Magdalen. It rests neither on history nor on tradition. It was Pope Gregory, in the seventh century, who, in the arrangement of his calendar, ordered the story of the woman who was a sinner to be read for the lesson of St. Magdalen's Day, and so the association was stamped on the mind of the Western Church, and calendars, churches, institutions, poets, painters, and sculptors, nay, the very use of common language itself, all helped to perpetuate the calumny, and to make the association well-nigh indelible for the mass of Christian people. It is a very nightmare of evil thinking and speaking. You cannot see Mary at all through such a murk of shameful slander, and to blast a woman's character on such a flimsy conjecture is surely, to all right-minded men and women, a thing to be resented for its flagrant violation of the requirements both of reason and of righteousness.

Sacred art often portrays her as a weeping woman; and well it may. We read more than once of her tears, and we need not wonder at it; for a great and awful shadow had fallen across her life before the time at which she appears in Holy Writ. We read that the power of Christ had cast out of her seven demons. We cannot now digress into a consideration of all that was implied in this and the many similar expressions in the Gospels. It suffices to say that they certainly denote a frightful spiritual calamity. In many cases we must admit the precise nature of the curse to be beyond our powers of explanation or comprehension. But this we know: demoniacal possession did not mean moral turpitude. The essence of the malady was that it was a power distinct from the will of the victim. It was a proof of the distraction and not of the wickedness of the sufferer. The cause of possession may be obscure enough, and you can speculate upon it as you will, but there is nothing in the least obscure about its effects. It produced insanity of various forms and degrees, mounting sometimes to periodical fits of frenzy. It is always classed with the other diseases which Jesus Christ cured by His miraculous powers—with blindness, deafness, dumbness, paralysis, epilepsy. The victim is always regarded as an object of human pity, and never of moral denunciation; and all through the Gospels it is the misfortune and not the fault of the sufferer that is the ruling thought of the narrator. The distraction of insanity is indeed by so much a release from moral responsibility, and to put it all down as wickedness shows only our own muddled understanding, which fails to distinguish the eternal difference between things physical and things moral.

It has been suggested that Mary Magdalene sustained a peculiar relationship to Jesus, and painters have depicted her as a beautiful young woman with a great wealth of auburn hair. Certainly she was always a prominent figure of the group. In addition to following Him on His preaching tours, she is mentioned as standing by His Cross, watching His burial, buying spices for His embalment and visiting the sepulchre on the morning of the Resurrection. She lingered behind in her grief after the others had gone, and claimed the right to remove and re-bury the body if it could be found. She was the first to see and speak with the risen Saviour, and the first to tell the news to others. She is named fourteen times in the New Testament. These facts show that she was the most prominent woman in the group. But it was the prominence which her force of character and her special gratitude gave her. That she was either young or beautiful is a pure imagination. She may have been both; but if she was, the Evangelists never suggest any such thing, while they bear united witness to her grateful devotion to Christ and her zeal in His service.

Among the first of those in the gospel story for whom a great deliverance was wrought: among the first whom we find sorrowing by the Cross of Christ, and watching by His tomb, Mary Magdalene was actually the first called upon to rejoice in the Resurrection hope—a pledge, may we not say, that those who seek Christ earnestly will never seek Him in vain: and that though

'weeping may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning'?

As the words of the old Latin hymn have been rendered:

Magdalena, past is wailing,
Calm thy sorrows, cease thy tears,
They no more can be availing
As when Jesus soothed thy fears:
Raise the strain, the heavens are ringing,
Thousand voices joyous singing,
Hallelujah! Christ is King!

. . . . . .

Magdalena, now adore Him;
Mark how triumph crowns His brow;
Peace is evermore before Him,
Honour is His guerdon now.
See the wounds that tell His story
In the glad new life of glory!
Hallelujah! Christ is King.

Magdalena, thou delightest
In the light that may not wane;
Resting where the beams are brightest,
Lo, thou fear'st not death nor pain:
Grief and woe henceforth are banished;
In the day that night has vanished;
Hallelujah! Christ is King!

Certain Women.

Luke viii. 2, 3.—'And certain women . . . and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.'

We are perhaps apt to think too much of the *bad* treatment Christ got while He was in the world, to think of Him too exclusively as one who was despised and rejected of men, to think only of how He came to His own and how His own received Him not, and to forget that He had friends as well as enemies, well-wishers as well as foes; and if many hated Him or sought to thwart Him or were indifferent to Him, many were strongly attached to Him, sought to help on His work, and were deeply interested in all He said and did. The scene on the road to the Cross itself, when part of the crowd kept shouting, 'Away with him! Crucify him!' and part wept and bewailed Him, truly represents what often took place during the days of His ministry.

And even when we think of His friends, we are apt to think only of the Apostles, of Mary Magdalene, of the other Mary, of Martha and Lazarus, perhaps, and of a few more whose names are mentioned, and to forget that He had other humbler friends who were just as true to Him, and in a sense as necessary to Him, as those of whose feelings and deeds we are expressly told. We are apt to forget that He had many nameless friends, friends whose names are not recorded in the Gospels or known to the Church, but whose names, like those of the helpers Paul speaks about, are known to God and written in God's Book of Life.

This is a fact we ought to remember for the credit of our human nature, which is apt to look so black in connection with the world's treatment of Jesus; but it is a fact we ought also to reflect upon as suggestive of some helpful and encouraging lessons. One would have thought that when the historian of the early Church was telling the story of our Lord's life, mentioning the names of those who showed Him kindness, it would have been an easy matter for him to give an exhaustive list, and to omit nobody; but instead of that he apparently had no room for them all, and after mentioning one or two who are worthy of having their names published for social reasons, or because their devotion was specially marked, he winds up in his generous way with the very comprehensive phrase, 'and many others.' It is so like St. Luke, who never misses a chance of putting in a good word for human nature, even when he finds it in Samaritan devils and Syrophenician dogs and Roman centurions, to say the best he could of the Galileans and of that world which would not let Christ live.

1. 'Certain women.' The names of only a few of them are given; but other particulars are added which enable us to form a fairly correct view of the group as a whole. They were mostly married ladies of the age probably of His own mother, who occupies a place in the centre of the group. Several of them are the mothers of some of His disciples. Thus we have Salome, the mother of James and John and the wife of Zebedee; and Mary, the mother of Joses and James the less. Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward, and Mary, the wife of Cleopas, are also

named. Among those whose relations are not particularly described are His own maternal aunt, Susanna, and Mary Magdalene. These facts go far to explain the presence of these women among the associates of Jesus.

2. But another fact is mentioned by Luke, the physician, which also throws light on the subject, namely, that Christ had healed most of these women of various infirmities. There are intimations that their number stretched far beyond the few who are named, so that it is not difficult to add to the list from the women whom, in the course of His ministry, He had blessed. They were thus not only attached to the company by natural ties, but were specially bound to Him by the stronger bond of personal gratitude.

3. One other fact about these women must be noted. It must often have occurred to thoughtful readers of the Gospels to ask how Christ and His disciples were supported during those three years, seeing that they had all given up their ordinary employment. Christ declared when sending forth His missionaries that the labourer was worthy of his hire, and told them to trust to the hospitality of the people; and this they no doubt did. But practically it is not a satisfactory thing to be always thus dependent. There were times and places in which both Christ and His disciples were unpopular, and when it became necessary, as well as advisable, to be independent. That they were in the habit of receiving money for this purpose is evident from the facts that the community had a treasurer, and that we are told of the disciples, when passing through Samaria, going 'into the city to buy food.' Where did they get the money? The freewill offerings of people benefited may have done something in this direction, but, looked at practically, thirteen men, in a country like Palestine, could hardly be supported wholly in that way. Besides, we have no hint that such freewill offerings were either asked or given. The true answer to the question of their support is that these women, who were evidently in some cases women of means, 'ministered unto them of their substance.' This indeed is given as the explanation of their presence among the disciples.

We have thus in the background of our Saviour's ministry this band of grateful, self-sacrificing, devoted women, to whose liberality and thoughtful service the whole apostolate was indebted, and who made it possible for Christ and His disciples to evangelize the whole of the country without casting themselves on the care of hearers who might be unsympathetic. And for rendering this important service these women must ever be held in love and respect and honour by all who have the interests of the Saviour's Kingdom at heart. They did what they could to make His earthly lot as comfortable as circumstances would admit; and their tender sympathy and practical devotion must have cheered Him often when He turned, heavy at heart, from the opposition of unbelieving men. He had helped them and they helped Him, and thus they have a place among those who influenced His life.

¶ 'The growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.' [1]

The Nameless Followers.

Luke viii. 3.—'And many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.'

1. How few are the really great saints—even when you take to manufacturing them in the Roman Catholic fashion—the great good men whose example and memory are still actively influencing the world! How few, how very few, compared with the numberless names that have been utterly forgotten, are the names which have been barely preserved in the records of the Church! Even in the Gospels themselves, even when the historian is telling us of the actual friends of the then living Christ, at a time when you might think you could have counted them nearly all on your fingers, and a list of whom would have been more interesting than a list of the dukes of Edom or the mighty men of David—what is it you find? The mention of a few distinguished and a few undistinguished names, and for all the rest practically *silence*—a tombstone without an epitaph or at least without even the initials of those who sleep below, a nameless cairn which marks the resting place of the forgotten

[1] George Eliot, *Middlemarch*.

dead—'and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.'

And so it must ever be. The mass of Christians can never hope to be historical saints, to have their lives written and their days kept, or openly and palpably to influence those who come after them. Most of us can never hope to have even our names remembered in the Church as a Church after we are gone; and to attain to the immortality even of Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna is beyond the reach of us all, however good we are or however much we do. If we are to be numbered among those who have helped and served Christ, and shown real devotion to Him and His cause, we must be content to be merged in the great crowd of His nameless forgotten friends, the common undistinguished mass, the 'many others' who have, according to their means, ministered to Him of their substance.

But then how much that means! Without wishing to undervalue the blessed influence of the Christian good and great, without wishing to say anything against the habit of commemorating their virtues, without in any way undervaluing the precious heritage of Christian biography and the stimulating memories of our moral and religious heroes, may one not say that in the average community, in the average congregation, it is the man or woman who will ultimately be classed nameless amongst the 'many others' who can do the most direct work for Christ, and even accomplish what the greatest saint cannot do?

We nameless Christians, we who belong, or ought to belong, to the 'many other' class, do not know our power and often do not realize what a chance we have. We are apt to forget that, after all, the exercising of a really Christian influence does not depend on extent of sphere, number of gifts, or abundance of opportunity so much as on the quality of the influence. We are apt to forget that in the long-run it is by living personal influence that religion most enduringly and effectively spreads. Even to convince *one other* by your unselfishness, by your charitable spirit, your courage in the face of difficulties, your large-heartedness, your manifestation of a Christian spirit, that your religion is a living power behind all you think and say and do—what a work to accomplish! For that other may in turn become a centre of wholesome, helpful, purifying influences. And who can tell how far these influences may extend? Nay, though you pass away and join the great nameless crowd of the 'many others' your influence abides for ever, and will last through all eternity.

¶ I knew a few years ago a young hewer in a Durham pit—I think I could go down on my knees if I met him. He was nothing particular in the pit, except a steady workman, but Christ so lived in him, and shone out of him (for he was everybody's friend), that if he came where there was bad talk, it stopped dead till he was past, silenced not by anything he said, but by what he was, an out-and-out converted man to whom Christ was everything. Such a life as that tells as nothing else tells on the world around.[1]

2. No doubt it is a grand thing to be, say, a popular Christian novelist, and to have your books selling by thousands and read by all classes in the community, and to exercise what is called a great influence; but when all is said and done, it may well be doubted if the influence of a Christian story-writer is really so permanent, or enters so much into the permanent life of the world, as the influence of a good mother who is impressing certain ideals of life and conduct on her children; as the influence of the man or woman who in any community is a living condemnation of the sins of selfishness and worldliness and uncharitableness. Such people are a living stimulus to a quiet, consistent, Godfearing, Christ-serving life, by their genuinely Christian walk and conversation.

¶ I read lately the autobiography of one who had read about more good men and who came into contact with more good men than most of the people of his day, and he frankly tells us that he owed more to his mother than to them all. 'She said to me, "Be faithful," and she lived like an emblem of faith. "Be loving," and her love was deep as the sea. "Be true," and she was true as the eternal stars.'[2]

3. We need to pray God to raise up great preachers, and great Church leaders, and great good men. But we need also to pray God that individual Christians should be roused to realize and make use of their chances, to feel that a

[1] *The Life of Handley Carr Glyn Moule*, 283

[2] E. B. Speirs.

solemn obligation lies on them to exercise a Christian influence, and to minister to Christ of their substance by ministering to others out of what they possess, or ought to possess, of the Christian graces and the Christian spirit. And what we want is not merely more Marys and Joannas and Susannas, but more of the 'many others' who will never be immortalized unless in the lives they quietly influence for good. Though they have been utterly forgotten, they have in many a quiet corner, in many a lowly household, as good fathers and mothers, as good sons and daughters, as good neighbours, as good members of churches, sweetened life, raised one's ideas of human nature, left fragrant memories of genuine goodness, made Christ real and Bible teaching an acted gospel. It is such that we must trust to do much of the abiding work of the Church still, the work which will remain and be remembered by God when much that has been accomplished with noise and show will have utterly passed away.

¶ A distinguished English writer, whose name is often quoted in magazines and newspapers, and whose opinion is considered of great value, was lately making an almost pathetic confession of what he felt to be the injustice that was being done, through praise of him, to the many who, he said, had made his work possible, but of whom scarcely anybody had ever heard; and though he is not generally considered much of a Christian, and is in no sense a sentimentalist, he gave a little bit of his own experience which one may appropriately quote here. . . . He told his audience of a young man he knew at college, who was far from being what is called clever, and who died shortly after leaving the university. He was absolutely modest, and looked up with admiration to his teachers, and yet he was of more real use to his contemporaries than any of those whom they would have considered influential. Without any special gifts he somehow represented with singular completeness a beautiful moral type. 'He would have been unfeignedly surprised to hear, what I most sincerely believe to be the truth, that I, his tutor owed incomparably more to the living exemplification of what is meant by a character of unblemished purity and simplicity than he owed to his tutor, whose teaching he received with unaffected humility.'[1]

[1] E. B. Speirs.

The Parable of the Sower.

Luke viii. 5.—'A sower went out to sow his seed.'

In His earlier ministry Jesus seems to have spoken without parables. The disciples' question following this parable, according to Matthew, asks His reason for what seems to have been a new method. The reason lay in the very crowds that had been drawn to hear; for these were the sign of passing curiosity or momentary excitement, and sifting was required. The parabolic form revealed and concealed, as we shall see, and hence became a test. This first of all the parables discloses our Lord's own thoughts as to the issue of His teaching, and was at once a warning to His hearers and an encouragement to His servants in that work of sowing the word which would soon be theirs.

1. The beginning of the parable is simple and sublime: 'A sower went out to sow his seed.' We do not know the name of the sower; it is not given; nor the status of the sower. Was he king or clown, peer or peasant? What he was is not important. He went out to sow his seed. It is so simple, yet it is so sublime. It is not, 'A great general went out to war.' It is better than that. It is not, 'A great scientist went into his laboratory.' It is better than that. It is not, 'A great statesman took his seat among the elders of the people.' It is better than that. It belongs to us all: 'A sower went out to sow his seed.'

¶ The famous French painter, Jean François Millet, the creator of those masterpieces of art, 'The Angelus,' 'The Gleaners,' and 'The Man with the Hoe,' gained his first reputation as a portrayer of peasant life by a picture called 'The Sower,' which many competent critics have pronounced the greatest of that remarkable series which came from his hand. It is an excellent illustration of the sower in our Lord's parable. I have the impression that the artist must have had this parable in mind, as well as the peasant life of France, when he executed his great conception. He came from a peasant's home himself, a home of simple and unaffected piety; he was a man of deep religious experience; and 'The Sower' was painted at a crisis in his career, when, disgusted with the frivolity and sin of Paris and the kind of work he was compelled to

do there in order to earn a living, he forsook the gay capital and took up his residence in the country. 'The Sower' embodied his idea of life and its labours.[1]

2. The seed is plentiful. In the early chapters of *The Origin of Species,* Darwin has marshalled a host of impressive facts to illustrate how all plants and herbs and grasses strive to reproduce themselves, and shed myriads of seed-germs and spores and pollen dust. And there is the same inexhaustible munificence in the kingdom of grace. God's spiritual seed is falling on us everywhere in endless superabundance. The influences and messages and germs of His love are always struggling to make their way and enter and take root in our souls. Yet even the Divine Sower, as He lifted up His eyes on the multitudes gathered round Him, discerned how many of His words were wasted, how small a fraction of those who listened received His teaching with an honest and good heart.

Remember that in this case it was very good seed—the very best that could be sown; for the seed that the man sowed was the Word of God. Of course, if a sower will go out and sow chaff he will get no return. If his seed is at fault the harvest is sure to be wrong. If he sows tares he will reap tares. If he sows chaff he will reap —nothing. But if he sows good seed, the very best seed, what then? What happens? This happens: it will fail three times, and only once succeed. Three to one! Failure! Was he a good sower? Yes; it was a *sower* went out to sow. It was no amateur who did not know his work. He knew his work well enough. He went out as a man goes out who knows what he is about and does what he intends to do. He was a sower and he could sow, and he had the very best seed, for it was from the granary of God. And yet, three times it failed.

¶ 'Sowing is a matter of vast importance. Do you know all about the nature of the seed? Do you understand the physiology of its growth? and have you studied all that learned men tell us about the process of its development?'

'No, sir; indeed I don't,' says the sower.

'But really, how can you sow unless you know all these things? How do you know, for instance, that this is good seed at all?'

Ah! it is good to see the sower then. There is no mistake about that. The man's face lights up with a smile. 'Know it, sir? Why, how should I know it, but one way? *I have been feeding upon it for months past.* I have got the strength of it in me now. I had my breakfast off it this morning, as fine a bit of wheaten bread as ever I wish to eat.'[1]

3. Everything in the parable turns upon the difference in quality of the various patches of ground on which the seed is sown. As in other parables, our Lord simplifies His story to the utmost, ignoring all conditions that are not directly to the point, and treating all but the barest details as irrelevant. He accepts the facts of human nature as they are, and gives no explanation why in some hearts the soil is so bad. The good seed finds its way to every corner of the field, but owing to the varying character of the soil, it is only partially productive. Where the Word of God fails to have any effect, the fault lies, not in the seed, nor in the sower, but in the ground.

(1) The first failure is the hard trodden wayside path. The good seed is unable to penetrate it. After lying for a time, as it were, on the surface of a man's mind, it is carried off out of his reach by some malign agency outside himself. In some way or other men's hearts become hardened, like the soil of the wayside, against Divine influence. This hardening of the heart may be due to evil living, and if so, it can be removed only by amendment of life; but it may also be due to purely intellectual influences, to the use, perhaps, of a narrow, logical method which overlooks wider issues, or to the modern prejudice against the miraculous and the supernatural as such. Our Lord's explanation of this part of the parable in Matthew's Gospel is of great importance here. 'When any one,' He says, 'heareth the word of the kingdom, *and understandeth it not* . . . this is he which received seed by the wayside.' Had he understood, Jesus seems to imply, he would have taken the Word into his heart. A man may be intellectually quite honest in his rejection of religion, and yet entirely fail to understand what

[1] R. Cecil.

[1] M. G. Pearse, *Parables and Pictures*, 32.

it means. It has been said that the world is now rejecting Christianity because it is ceasing to understand what it is. There is a good deal of truth in that. If you would understand the Word of the Kingdom when it comes to you, you must wait and ponder and prepare yourself. The 'wayside' in the parable could not harbour the seed because it had not been ploughed. So the human heart needs the tillage of humility and reverence, of honesty and earnestness, of study and meditation. The way is very hard for men, until they feel that they can pray to God; then it becomes easier. After that, year by year, the Christian's experience deepens his rational conviction that the Word of the Lord is true.

(2) Then, secondly, we have the rock-bound soil. The field, like many a one in hilly country, had places where the hard foundation of underlying rock had only a thin skin of earth over it. Its very thinness helped quick germination, for the rock was near enough to the surface to get heated by the sun. So, with undesirable rapidity, growth began, and shoots appeared above ground before there was root enough below to nourish them. There was only one possible end for such premature growth—namely, withering in the heat. No moisture was to be drawn from the shelf of rock and the sun beat fiercely down, so the feeble green stem drooped and was wilted.

It is the type of emotional hearers who are superficially touched by the gospel, and receive it without understanding what is involved. They take it for theirs with joy, but are strangers to the deep exercises of penitence and sorrow which should precede the joy. 'Lightly come, lightly go' is true in Christian life as elsewhere. Converts swiftly made are quickly lost. True, the most thorough and permanent change may be a matter of a moment; but, if so, like a great river forced through a mountain gorge, there will be compressed into that moment emotions which will do the work of years.

Such surface converts fringe all religious revivals. The crowd listening to our Lord was largely made up of them. These were they who, when a ground of offence arose, 'went back, and walked no more with him.' They have had their successors in all subsequent times of religious movement. Light things are caught up by the wind of a passing train, but they soon drop to the ground again. Emotion is good, if there are roots to it. But "these have no root." The gospel has not really touched the depths of their nature, their will, their reason, and so they shrivel up when they have to face the toil and self-sacrifice inherent in a Christian life.

(3) The third class of ground is thick with thorns. What are the thorns? Christ tells us.

(*a*) *The cares of life.*—'Well, you know,' say some, 'a man has got to live. It is all very well for you to say we must attend to religion. A man has got to live.' Yes, that is quite true; but he has got to die. People always say disparagingly, 'We never see any working men in church.' How can they come to church? they ask. They have got to live. Archbishop Davidson says very pertinently, 'Were the working men ever in church?' It is the cares of this world again! We have all so much to do, and so much to think about.

¶ I remember a clergyman talking to a poor ostler when he was very ill. 'No,' he said, 'I have no time for religion—I have got three horses to look after.' [1]

(*b*) *The deceitfulness of riches.*—That is another form. There is the rush of anxiety. The whole soul is given up to making money. 'Oh, we must save up money for a rainy day!' And the rainy day never comes perhaps. 'Well, when we have made enough, we shall give the rest to charity.' But when have you made enough? That is the question. And so men die; and they used to die millionaires, and now they die multimillionaires. You know it is quite true: 'The deceitfulness of riches.' And our Lord said, 'How hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!' It *is* hard!

(*c*) Then there is *the pride of life*—that pride which capitivates almost every young man and increases as he gets to the adolescent stage, and as he begins to achieve success. 'The pride of life!' To be known; to be respected; to have one's name talked about; to be somebody instead of nobody; to be popular. And the Word of God is of none effect. Pre-occupation! Oh, how true, 'The cares of life!' 'The deceitfulness of riches' and 'the pride of life!'

(4) The last class avoids the defects of the three preceding. The soil is soft, deep, and clean.

[1] Father Stanton.

The seed sinks, roots, germinates, has light and air, and brings forth ripened grain. The 'honest and good heart' in which it lodged has been well characterized as one 'whose aim is noble, and who is generously devoted to his aim.' Such a soul Christ recognizes as possible, prior to the entrance into it of the Word. There are dispositions which prepare for the reception of the truth. But not only the previous disposition, but the subsequent attitude to the Word spoken, is emphasized by our Lord. 'They having heard the word, hold it fast.' Docilely received, it is steadily retained, or held with a firm grip, whoever and whatever may seek to pluck it from mind or heart.

Further, not only tenacity of grasp, but patient perseverance of effort after the fruit of Christian character, is needed. There must be perseverance in the face of obstacles within and without, if there is to be fruitfulness. The emblem of growth does not suffice to describe the process of Christian progress. The blade becomes the ear, and the ear the full corn without effort. But the Christian disciple has to fight and resist, and doggedly to keep on in a course from which many things would withdraw him. The nobler the result, the sorer the process. Corn grows; character is built up as the result first of worthily receiving the good seed, and then of patient labour and much self-suppression.

Good is the seed the sower sows,
  But should it fall on hardened soil
Birds snatch it ere the seedling grows,
  And bootless is the sower's toil.

Good is the seed: but should it light
  On rocky ground where soil is thin,
The blade of rash unrooted height
  Dies for a lack of sap within.

Good is the seed: but should it drop
  On unprepared or thorny ground,
The sower, seeking, finds a crop,
  But choked by briars trailing round.

From hardened heart, from shallow soul
  Where faith may fade for lack of root,
From choking cares, Lord, keep me whole,
  To bear, with patience, perfect fruit.[1]

[1] F. Cornish, *Week by Week*, 27.

Thin Soil.

Luke viii. 6.—'Some fell upon a rock.'

It is easy to bring before our minds the sight of which our Lord speaks. It may well be that as He speaks His eyes are resting on it, and His hand, perhaps, is pointing to it. In one part of a cornfield sloping down towards the Sea of Galilee He may have marked how thin a coating of soil covered the rock of the hillside. The seed sown in that shallow ground has had a rapid and a feeble growth; the rock has checked its roots from striking downwards to reach the nourishment it needs; and so checked, and forced, perhaps, into unnaturally quick development by the hot surface of the stone, the plant has, as we say, run to stalk; the energy which should have been spent in secretly penetrating to the sources of substance and renewal has all been thrown into a showy and ill-nourished growth. There may have been a fair appearance of promise at the first; but there is no reserve or reality of strength; there is no communication with the hidden springs of refreshment when the need comes; and as soon as the fierce rays of the Eastern sun beat down upon it, the thin, frail, rootless and resourceless plant withers away. The heat which might have advanced and ripened and perfected it, had its growth been gradual and well sustained, is too much for it now. There is in it no robustness to bear the strain, no substance to be matured by it; and because it has no moisture and no root, when the sun is up it withers away.

1. Now 'those on the rock are they which, when they have heard, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.' In the pregnant phrase of Luke, 'they have no root in themselves.'

If a type of this class is sought for in the gospel records it may be found in the man who said to Jesus, 'Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest,' and to whom Jesus replied, 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.' The reply clearly implies that this would-be disciple was under some sudden impulse, proposing to follow Christ without considering what

the step involved. He had received the word of the Kingdom with joy, and came to offer himself as a disciple in a spirit of romantic enthusiasm, without the smallest idea what he was undertaking, utterly unaware of the hardships of disciple life. But what need to point to the scribe as if he were a solitary instance of inconsiderate profession! Was not the crowd by the lake, to which the parable of the Sower was spoken, full of such professors? There was great religious enthusiasm —what in these days would be called a 'great revival'—in Galilee, and there were many in that crowd who had come under its influence. Infected by the spirit of the time, they followed Jesus, by whose preaching of the Kingdom the movement had been created, whithersoever He went—delighted to hear Him speak, feeling as if they could never hear enough of the precious words which fell from His lips. But, alas! their religion consisted largely in sympathy with their fellows, and in vague romantic dreams concerning the kingdom that was coming; and so when the time of disenchantment came, and they learnt that their dreams were not likely to be realized, they 'went back, and walked no more with him.' How often has the same tragedy been repeated in the history of religious movements of a popular character! It is persons whose spiritual nature resemble the rocky ground who are chiefly influenced by such movements. Others of deeper character and more promise may be touched in small numbers, but these are sure to be touched in large numbers. And so it comes to pass that the melancholy history of many hopeful religious movements is this: many converts, few stable Christians; many blossoms, little fruit coming to maturity.

I plucked it in an idle hour,
  And placed it in my book of prayer,
'Tis not the only passion flower
  That hath been crushed and hidden there.
And now through floods of burning tears
  My withered bloom once more I see,
And I lament the long, long years,
  The wasted years, afar from Thee.

My flower is emblem of the bright
  'First fervor' that my spirit knew,
A dream of beauty, joy and light—
  Now pale and dead it meets my view.
What is there left of dream or flower
  But ashes? Take, I pray, from me,
All my vain thoughts of fame and power,
  And draw my spirit nearer Thee.[1]

2. The Word of God must get down to a man's *will;* for his inner self is what he is *willing* to be. Unless religion is conceived as *an obligation*—a power which reaches, grasps, and holds the will—it cannot stand the strain of life.

(1) There comes, perhaps, the temptation to grow tired of *moral drudgery*—the long and weary task of daily self-discipline, of getting rid of some besetting fault. It is a tedious and depressing task, assuredly; and the feelings of religion can apparently maintain themselves without it; why take so much pains about it? Yet it is scarcely too much to say that two-thirds of true practical religion is just this drudgery of daily discipline. It can be faced, maintained, brought to success only by a man whose religion has got down to the roots of his being, and there more and more works with the steadiness and spontaneity of a new instinct.

(2) There comes, perhaps, the trial of a *great sorrow.* How common, how pitiful, is the spectacle of the withering of religion under the blight of suffering! 'I used to enjoy my prayers; I loved my church, its sacraments, its services; and now, just when I want it most, my religion fails me.' Many a time has one heard that bitter complaint on the lips of those who, when the sun shone, were very religious. Doubtless it may be failure of nerves rather than failure of faith which accounts for this sense of blankness. But too often the reason is that faith has not got down to, and mingled itself with, the roots of life—its elementary instincts, its enduring characteristics. How different these complaints from the words with which Jesus, in whom the Father's will was the very breath of life, met the coming of His Passion—'Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son.'

(3) Or there may come the trial of '*persecution.*' We may be sure that our religion has only a surface hold when we find that it becomes harassed, petulant, distressed in the atmosphere of criticism; and criticism is the most common modern substitute for the older and franker modes of

[1] E. C. Howarth.

persecution. If a man's religion is part of himself —rooted in the bases of his being—he will not be tossed to and fro by the currents of opinion and talk. He may not be able to meet argument by argument, he may be baffled often in his own reasoning, but the 'man in him,' the real self, will remain unshaken.

That is the lesson for our learning. Religion, if it is to be sure and strong, must be pressed down till it reaches and grasps man's inmost self —that self which abides the same beneath all changes and chances of life and sorrow and doubt. This is the *radical* reform of which the characters of most of us stand in urgent need. It comes to this—have we any conviction for which we are ready to die, that is, which we could not give up without giving up the whole meaning of life? Such a final standing-ground Frederick Robertson reached. 'In the darkest hours through which a human soul can pass, whatever else is doubtful, this at least is certain—if there is no God, no future state, yet even then it is better to be generous than selfish, better to be true than false, better to be brave than to be a coward.' Not much, you may say, but at least it was a root which had wrought itself into the fibres of the man's whole being. Therefore a new strong faith could grow up from it—'a faith and hope and trust,' as he says, 'no longer traditional but his own—a trust which neither earth nor hell shall shake henceforth for ever.' Such a standing-ground they reach who know that they would rather part with life itself than with the conviction which alone gives life its meaning and its inspiration, the conviction that the inner voice which once called them from the drift of indifference and set the light of a true ideal before them, and since then has cheered and guided them in their new journey was the voice of a Living Person, Jesus the Lord and Brother of men.

Force not thy upward growth, but first of all
  Deepen thy roots, then may'st thou well sustain
The rays of sunlight that upon thee fall,
  And, without withering, all thy strength retain.
Plants that have little else but leaf and flower,
  However bright their hue, live but their little hour.[1]

[1] John Sharp

Thorny Soil.

Luke viii. 7.—'Some fell among thorns.'

Some of the seed fell in unclean soil, in which secretly lurked the seeds of many thorny weeds, which grew up with the grain, and at length overtopped and overmastered it, taking to themselves all the sap that was needed for its nourishment, so that it never came to maturity. There was a real growth so far; but it was not the exclusive growth of the good seed, for other things sprang up by which it was ultimately choked. Now, in His interpretation of the story, our Lord tells us what these thorns represent in the heart of the gospel hearer. In Matthew He describes them as 'the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches'; in Mark He calls them 'the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things'; while in Luke He summarises them as 'cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life.'

1. 'The cares of this world.' There is a small but very fatal species of this thorn called fretfulness. Once fretfulness establishes itself in the heart, the task of uprooting it is analogous to the task of uprooting chickweed from one's garden. It is small, but most prolific, and makes a terrible drain upon our resources. We are very prone to forget the devastating power of little frets. Two hundred and forty pennies will run away with a pound quite as effectually as eight half-crowns; and there are people who have not eight big anxieties in their life draining away their strength, but who have two hundred and forty little frets; and these accomplish the same impoverishment. There is an immense amount of moral energy and force extracted from the heart by sheer fretfulness. Many a man who gives way to the devil may trace his collapse to the exhausting influence of fretfulness. There is a word of the Psalmist which indicates startling moral insight, and reveals a profound moral truth. 'Fret not thyself . . . to do evil.' That is what fretting leads to—evil-doing! We can so reduce our moral force by fretfulness, so strain and weaken our spiritual garrison, that the citadel of our heart becomes a defenceless structure, and the tempter has easy entrance and possession and leads

us away captive at his will. Fretfulness diminishes spiritual force. It sucks away the thought and energy which ought to feed religious impulse and endeavour. To return to the Master's figure, it is a thorn among the wheat. It drains away the nourishment from the higher nature, and disables us from bringing any good impulse to perfection.

¶ Fretfulness is often due to overwork. And overwork itself chokes the seed. I was much struck by the remark made to me not long ago by a good working-man—'You wonder why the likes of me take so little thought for religion. Well, the fact is, we are mostly tired out.' The good soil is 'tired out': it becomes incapable of moral and spiritual effort. The energies of the soul cannot stand the double strain. Every effort, therefore, to lighten the pressure of toil, to make work more interesting in itself, shorter in its duration, more assured of its wage, makes for religion.[1]

2. 'The deceitfulness of riches.' Here is another thorn. Fretfulness cheats the heart of the thought which ought to feed the spiritual life. Riches, in most subtle deceitfulness, cheat the soul of the same bread. How do riches deceive men? Men are deceived as to when a normal and healthy desire for wealth passes into avarice. Their thought becomes so absorbed in the pursuit of wealth that they have none left to determine their moral whereabouts. While they are increasing in one kind of wealth, they are being secretly despoiled of another. The tempter puts gold into their hands, and while they are riveted in contemplation he strips the gold from their hearts. He deals with men much in the same way as we sometimes deal with little children. There is your little one, who has somehow or other got hold of your gold watch, and is playing with it on the hearth rug. The problem is, how to get it away. You do not make a violent grab at the treasure. You take something else of most trifling value, and seek to engage the child's attention by that; and while the attention is diverted, the greater treasure is quietly taken away. That is how we are treated by the devil. He diverts us with a toy, and then despoils the heart. 'While men slept, the enemy came.' Riches seduce our thought, and we lose our souls. The Master calls this 'deceitfulness of riches,' a thorn which sucks up the thought, the attention, the aspiration, the resolution; and so good impulse does not grow and come to maturity: it dies down and passes away.

3. 'The pleasures of this life.' This is another of the impoverishing thorns—voluptuousness of living, sensational living, a living in sensation, a living in the external senses, in the outside of the life. The pleasures of the senses are not to be despised, but we are not to abide in them. The passages in your house may be very beautiful, but you do not live in them. The passage leads into the living rooms, and there you abide. We are tempted to abide in the passages of life, in the body, to have our thought absorbed by the flesh, and to have no thought and prayer in the secret place. 'She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.' She has strayed so long in the passage that the fire has gone out in the living-room. She has dwelt so long in the senses that the fire has gone out in the heart. That is our snare—to give so much thought to the 'pleasures of this life' that we have none for 'the pleasures at God's right hand.' That is the thorn which chokes the wheat.

¶ Let us remember the advice of John Wesley's mother: 'Would you judge of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of pleasure,' she said, 'take this rule: whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the relish of spiritual things; —in short, whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself.'

¶ Acquaint yourselves with spiritual delights, and this will make a happy diversion from those that are sensual and earthly. Somewhat a man must have to delight in. It is the philosopher's remark, that they that know not the true pleasure of the mind, turn to the base pleasures of the body.[1]

[1] C. G. Lang, *Thoughts on some of the Parables of Jesus*, 28.

[1] Robert Leighton.

Good Soil.

Luke viii. 8.—'And other fell on good ground.

Luke viii. 15.—'That on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.'

1. The first requisite is 'an honest and good heart.' The word here translated 'honest' properly refers to beauty of character, and has no special allusion to sincerity, though this would undoubtedly be included as fundamental in all goodness. The two epithets are familiar in Greek usage, and are here confined to the Gospel of Luke, who was a Greek. A good heart is, on our side, the prime condition of religious growth. But it may be asked, If the heart be already good, what further is needed? Does not a good heart comprise within itself all religious excellence? Taking the word in its highest sense, it certainly does; but we must interpret it in contrast with the causes of unfruitfulness. The good heart is opposed to that kind of insensibility which is symbolized by the hard road. It is not so encrusted that the Divine Word cannot enter. It is conscious of its deficiencies, its weakness, its darkness, its inability to do the noblest things without the aid of the Supreme Wisdom and Power. It says, 'I can of mine own self do nothing'; the light of truth is not mine, but the Father's; 'I seek not my own will, but the will of him that sent me.'

Thus the good heart represents that lowliness of mind which Christ always inculcated as the one spirit without which none could enter His Kingdom. Without the humble willingness to receive Divine instruction, we must remain for ever 'of the earth, earthy.' And this spirit of lowliness should attend us always. We must not suppose that we reach a high standard of religion in an instant, and, having learned a few truths, have no further need of the reverent and listening heart. We may be self-willed in our religious as in other work; and so much of the pious labour of the world is marred with imperfections because those who perform it are seeking their own will, and not the will of Him who sent them. They are sincerely desirous to serve God, but forget that He alone can direct them in that service. And so men learn to think that they are doing God's will when they persecute His saints and prophets, and sing their profane hallelujahs over the blood of His martyrs, or with empty self-conceit press their superficial crudities on older and wiser people. It is strange and saddening, the blindness of the good, the errors into which men perpetually fall because they wait not for a higher voice to speak. He only is secure who, conscious of his own darkness, looks ever with surrendered heart for the Divine light.

Lord, give me light to do Thy work;
For only, Lord, from Thee
Can come the light, by which these eyes
The way of work can see.

The way is narrow, often dark,
With lights and shadows strewn;
I wander oft, and think it Thine,
When walking in my own.

Yet pleasant is the work for Thee,
And pleasant is the way;
But, Lord, the world is dark, and I
All prone to go astray.

Oh send me light to do Thy work!
More light, more wisdom give!
Then shall I work Thy work indeed,
While on Thine earth I live.

The work is Thine, not mine, O Lord;
It is Thy race we run;
Give light, and then shall all I do
Be well and truly done.[1]

2. The second requisite of the religious life is, that having heard the word we 'keep it.' We must, by a voluntary effort, retain within our thoughts the truths which have for an instant stirred our hearts; and when the first excitement is over we must be careful not to let our feelings die, but simply to transfigure them into the permanent form of principle. A temperament occasionally devout, an eye which now and then darts a prophetic glance into the invisible world, are not sufficient. Unless we preserve within the memory, and ponder in our minds, the visions of our sublimest moments, they will bless us no more than flitting phantoms, delighting the imagination with an unsubstantial splendour. To lowliness of

[1] Horatius Bonar.

mind, then, must be added force of will, a determination to 'hold fast that which is good.'

¶ The late Dr. McCosh of Princeton, after many years of separation, met a distinguished author who had been a fellow-student with him under Dr. Chalmers. 'Chalmers was the grandest man I ever knew,' said the author. 'I hero-worship him, but I don't now accept his principles.' 'I don't feel at liberty to worship any man,' Dr. McCosh replied, 'but I pay the highest homage to the principles which made Dr. Chalmers the man he was. If there ever lived a man who owed everything to his principles, that man was Thomas Chalmers.' [1]

3. Lastly, he 'brings forth fruits with patience.' The seed that is sown in him, finding a soil congenial to it, and watered by the dews of Heaven, 'takes root downward, and bears fruit upward.' Being 'nourished up in the words of faith, and of good doctrine,' he grows in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance—are in him, and abound. By the grace of God he 'keepeth himself'; and 'that wicked one,' who is always at hand to 'catch away that which was sown in the heart,' toucheth him not.

Seeing and Hearing.

Luke viii. 10—'Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.'

These words have been reckoned among the hard sayings of our Lord. Men have asked how they can be consistent with the notorious freeness and universality of the gospel; they have asked whether Christ can possibly have meant what His language appears to imply; whether it is conceivable that He should have deliberately withheld truth from those who came to Him to hear it; whether He purposely employed a method of teaching which should baffle them. Did He instruct His disciples because to them, a select and privileged group of men, it was given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom, and at the same time bewilder and mystify all other hearers? Could He have encouraged the spirit of selfish exclusiveness which prompted the question, 'Why speakest thou unto them in parables?'—the question evidently asked in pique by men who felt that their vested rights were being tampered with?

Taken as they stand, the words do seem to sanction the cruel distinction between the initiated few and the uninitiated many, and it is natural that we should shrink from attributing to our Lord what appears to be so much at variance with His spirit, and so out of keeping with His merciful mission. For this is He who never broke the bruised reed or quenched the smoking flax; this is He who came not to blind, but to enlighten, not to destroy, but to save! It is, no doubt, conceivable that He withheld again and again from self-satisfied hearers the truth they had unfitted themselves to receive; but it is not conceivable that He made the reception of Divine truth difficult to those whose minds were open to it. If the hearts and intellects of men were straitened, it was not in Him, but in themselves. The hindrances to fruitful hearing were not of His making, for was not the refrain of His ministry that He would, but they would not? On His part all was readiness, condescension, accommodation. All things were ready, the feast was spread. If it was spread in vain, the fault was not in the giver, but in the guest.

But, as a matter of fact and experience, do the parables conceal the thoughts and the grace of Christ? Do they not reveal them? Take that beautiful parable of the Good Samaritan. Does it leave us in doubt as to who is our neighbour? Does it not impress, with a force which no direct exhortation could equal, the great truth that every man who needs our help is our neighbour, though he should be also an enemy? Take, again, the parable of the Prodigal Son. Could that parable fail to reveal the inexhaustible love of our Father in heaven? It sets forth that love with a pathos and power impossible in any other form of appeal; and when all else has failed to touch the despairing and sin-laden, it has carried home a thousand times the Divine promise of pardon and peace. When we think what such parables can do, and have done, it is difficult to imagine that they can under any circumstances have been spoken in order that seeing men might not see, and hearing

[1] J. Wells, *The Life of James Hood Wilson, D.D.*, 175.

they might not understand, lest at any time they should turn to God, and love that which He commands, and desire that which He promises. And it is just the multitude, it is just the simple and unlettered many, those who are least versed in spiritual lore, those whose theological learning is scantiest, to whom the parable appeals. Being the most picturesque, it is the most stimulating and winning form in which Divine truth can be presented to the mind.

Now if we turn to Matthew's Gospel we find in chapter xiii. that our Lord explains at length His reason for extending His parabolic instruction to the multitude. Six verses are there devoted to the reply which by Mark and Luke is condensed into one. Matthew tells us that when the disciples asked our Lord why He taught thus, His answer was, 'Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore I speak to them in parables; because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And unto them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.'

No doubt even this reply has difficulties of its own, for it opens up to us that mysterious interaction of the human will and the Divine which has been from the beginning the standing problem of human thought, and which is perhaps insoluble. But here at least the language bears no trace whatever of sinister intent; there is nothing here to indicate that our Lord used the parable as the vehicle of instruction in order to veil truth from eyes and ears which would otherwise have perceived it. Here it is the listeners who are at fault; it is they who, having long failed to exercise the faculty of moral perception, have wellnigh lost it. If they are ever to perceive it must be through the medium of such bright and stirring images as He was employing to arrest them; the duty to be recognized must be taught afresh in homely forms and familiar illustrations; the pure light of truth must be tempered to the enfeebled vision; it must be refracted into softer hues such as the eye could bear. Therefore it was not to blind but to enlighten, not to drive away but to win—to bring man to God, not to keep them from Him—that Jesus Christ taught in parables.

Matthew, therefore, enables us to understand the merciful meaning which underlies this apparently hard saying in Mark and Luke. When we look at the reports of the Evangelists, and carefully compare them, we can have little difficulty in seeing what it was that He taught us, and what part of His answer it was that made the deepest impression upon those who heard Him. It may be said that the parable, like our Lord's whole mission on earth, was a test which served to reveal the thoughts of many hearts. No more hopeful method of bringing home the mysteries of the Kingdom to the multitude could have been devised. Their dullness, their spiritual immaturity and incapacity, was the reason for its adoption. In fact, our Lord tells His disciples that He had recourse to it in order that, if it came to the worst, they might remain as they were before—blind, deaf, and impenetrable. He bids us observe that the parables are, in fact, illustrations of that principle which determines universally the bestowal of spiritual good: 'Ask and ye shall receive.' 'Seek and ye shall find.' To those who are seeking light, light is given, while those who neither care for it nor seek it are left in darkness.

A thoughtful student of the Gospels has said that we probably miss much of the force of our Lord's sayings by not realizing the emotion with which they were uttered. We know how vast a difference this makes in the effect of all spoken words, and how completely the impression of printed utterances may be changed for one who has listened to the speaker of them, and has borne witness with eye and ear to the feeling which possessed him. It is a thought which cannot but cross our mind from time to time as we read the reported sayings of Jesus Christ—'If only we could supplement the written word by the living presence and living voice, how many difficulties

would, perhaps, vanish, how many hard sayings would lose their hardness, how much that seems paradoxical would be found to be natural and plain! For is it not the case that paradox is not so much a cynicism as the natural vesture of intense emotion, partly confessed and partly restrained? In the words before us a trace, a tone, of bitter disappointment might be found on the part of our Lord that the utmost He could do to reach the heart of men would be in vain; and after all was said and done many would remain untouched and untaught, incapable to the last of understanding the mysteries it so deeply concerned them to know. To Him who would have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth, what could have been sadder than to watch the effect of His words on those who were devoid of the honest and good heart, and to know that those words which were spirit and life to the truth-seeker were a savour of death unto death to the careless, the hardened, and the self-satisfied?

'To everyone that hath shall be given . . . and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.' Our Lord has made nothing clearer than that this law governs the whole spiritual kingdom, and takes effect through every individual probation. It is one of Lord Bacon's profound sayings that every parable has both a revealing and a concealing power. He who hath—he who not only hears with the ear, but understands with the heart—has more given to him; but he who hath not—the hard and sensual, in whom there is no spark of spiritual desire or trace of meekness to receive the engrafted word—loses even that which he seemeth to have. The very teaching which opens the eyes of others only intensifies his blindness; even the poor, confused notions of spiritual truth which have survived a life of vanity are further bewildered by the teaching which floods purer souls with light Divine.

O! worst of punishments, that brings
  A blunting of all finer sense,
  A loss of feelings keen, intense,
And dulls us to the higher things.

O! penalty most dire, most sure,
  Swift following after gross delights,
  That we no more see beauteous sights,
Or hear as hear the good and pure.

O! shape more hideous and more dread
  Than Vengeance takes in creed-taught minds,
  This certain doom that blunts and blinds,
And strikes the holiest feelings dead.[1]

The Word as Seed.

Luke viii. 11. 'The seed is the word of God.'

A SEED is a small thing containing a potential life, and it works under entirely different laws from those which govern the inorganic world around it. It came from a living plant, and it will develop into a living plant. Every particle of inanimate matter is unerringly ruled by gravitation, but the plant may act on its own living will. The slender blade of grass lifts itself in defiance of the pull of the gigantic earth, and the forest tree will raise whole tons of wood high into the air. We should need an engine and a crane, and much noise and smoke and clatter, before we could do the work that life does so easily and silently. As a seed is the starting-point of all this wondrous life in the world of the plants, so are the words of God the beginning of the life of the soul.

Now there is a real responsiveness in man to the Word of God. Among young people, especially, that Word is received, when they have the chance of hearing it, with eagerness and with joy. What we are responsible for, all of us who are engaged in Christian work, is that we should make known to men, as far as we ourselves know it, the word of God. That is the seed of the perfect life. We may interest them in very many ways, but if we do not interest them in God, and in what God has said, our work is a failure. We may impress them in many ways, in many ways create strong emotion among them, but if they are not impressed by God, and by what God has said, our work is a failure. We may excite them greatly. There is a certain dangerous influence in our own earnestness that other men can hardly help feeling, but if the excitement is not produced by what God has said our work is a failure. The Word of God—that is the true seed of the Divine life in man.

That does not mean everything that is contained in the Bible. In the Book of Genesis, for instance, there is a list of the dukes of Edom; in

[1] Ella Wheeler Wilcox, *Poems of Life and Moments*, 21.

the Book of Joshua there are geographical accounts of the settlement of the different tribes in Canaan; in the Books of Kings there is the story of the wars between Judah and Israel, and between Israel and the surrounding nations: we cannot consider that these are the root of the Divine life in man. In studying the four Gospels it is very useful to know something of the family of Herod, and about the notions of Pharisees and Sadducees, and about the form of the Lake of Galilee. But no one can imagine that knowledge of that sort is the root of the Divine life in man. The Word of God is the Word which actually reveals the thought of God about Himself and about us, just as my word is that which reveals my thought; and we must master that Word for ourselves. We must penetrate and possess it if we are to be restored to the image of God, and if we are to be of any real service to others. The Word of God, according to Christ, is to be like the seed from which the plant springs. It is to be the real beginning of the higher life and the constant support of it. Ancient psalmists, in their vivid picturesque way, found in the Word of the Eternal the real force which originated the creation. 'By the word of the Lord were the heavens made.' And so the Word of the Lord is the creative force by which the nobler creation, the Divine life of man, is called into existence, and by which it is continually sustained.

Many of us have passed through months of trouble, agitation, effort—trying to find our way to God. There was an awful darkness around us. We cried passionately for light, but no light came; there was an awful silence. We had a passionate longing to hear the voice of the Eternal, and the silence was unbroken. We thought that by strenuous effort, by self-discipline, we might at least attain the power of which the saints have spoken, and discover for ourselves that God was near.

I searched for God in field and town,
And nearly tracked His footsteps down
One time when all the east was bright
With moonbeams silvering the night—
But ever He escaped from me
As I pursued Him wearily.

And once within a dripping wood
With cool rain splashing where I stood,
And out beyond the fearful sea
Was mad with rage and misery . . .
But ever He escaped from me
As I pursued Him ceaselessly.

And in a place where Mass was sung
And altar lights with incense hung,
Where chanting voices rose and sought
To reach the Infinite, I thought . . .
But ever He escaped from me
As I pursued Him fearfully.

In endless words of endless books
I sought, where fancy turns and looks,
Or reason offers signs to lead
To Him who is my only need.
But ever He escaped from me
As I pursued Him anxiously.[1]

We were almost in despair, for no answer came. And why? We had reversed the true relation between ourselves and God. We thought that the root of our higher life was to be in ourselves; that we were to make a beginning, and that God would perfect it; that our work was to reach the infinite pity of the Divine heart; that in answer to our cry God would come near. We forgot the history of God's infinite love for our race, the words of the prophets, the gospel of the Apostles. We forgot the supreme revelation of the Eternal righteousness and the Eternal love, the descent of the Son of God from transcendent heights of glory to dark abysses of sorrow, agony, and death; and despair gave place to hope only when strength was exhausted, and when we discovered at last that our Divine life was to begin, not when God answered our word, but when we answered His. Then we began to listen. Our own vehement outcries ceased, and we received into our heart with wonder and joy the Word which came from Him.

Begin with the Divine word. Let your life be rooted, not in any resolution of your own, but in the Divine purpose. It is God's will revealed in many ways that you should live the perfect life. That is your destiny according to the infinite love, the eternal thought and purpose of your Creator. He gave you life and being for this. He has revealed that will in many ways—

[1] D. H. S. Nicholson, *Poems*, 34.

in law, in promise, in conscience, in the life of Christ, who illustrated the Divine ideal of man as well as the true life of God. Pass beyond the law to the Divine will which it expresses. Pass beyond the promise to the infinite love which longs to fulfil it. Pass beyond conscience—for conscience can give you no strength to obey its own law—to the living God whose minister conscience is, and who can inspire you with strength to do His will. Pass beyond the life of Christ to the Eternal Father, and find in the life of Christ the expression of what God wills that you should be. And let that Divine will, beyond any resolution of your own, be the beginning and the origin of your better life. Do not think of the Divine strength as coming to the aid of your own best purposes; rely on the strength of God to fulfil the purpose of God, and let the word of God be the root of your righteousness.

The same law is to be recognized through all the provinces of our spiritual activity. Give God always the first place; take the second yourself. Let the Word of God be the root of every endeavour to serve mankind and to glorify the Eternal; and instead of building on the sandy foundations of your own purposes, build on the Eternal rock of the Divine purposes. It is God's will; take care you do not thwart it, take care you do not defeat it. It is God's will; you may thwart it, you may defeat it, but let it be accomplished by your frank acceptance of it. It is God's will not only that you should receive the pardon of sin and eternal life in Christ, but that you and Christ should be comrades in restoring our race to Himself.

O Lord, fulfil Thy Will
Be the days few or many, good or ill:
Prolong them, to suffice
For offering up ourselves Thy sacrifice;
Shorten them if Thou wilt,
To make in righteousness an end of guilt.
Yea, they will not be long
To souls who learn to sing a patient song;
Yea, short they will not be
To souls on tiptoe to flee home to Thee.
O Lord, fulfil Thy will:
Make Thy Will ours, and keep us patient still
Be the days few or many, good or ill.[1]

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

Honest and Good.

Luke viii. 15.—"In an honest and good heart."

THIS parable of the Sower deals with the question of qualifications. Under the simile of different kinds of soil Christ describes different types of men, some of them wholly incapable of receiving His message and His life, others only partially capable, others again endowed with the qualification which He requires; wayside men, and rocky ground men, and thorny ground men, and good ground men.

In St. Luke's account of Christ's own interpretation of the parable two words occur, in the description of the good ground men, which seem to be of considerable significance; a significance which is increased when we remember that of all the New Testament writers St. Luke is probably the most scholarly and succinct, very accurate in his diction, seldom using a redundant or unmeaning word. The whole sentence is as follows: "That in the good ground, these are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and bring forth fruit with patience," and the two words referred to are the words "honest" and "good." We may be assured that these words, or rather the Greek words of which they are the translation, did not slip into the text haphazard, but were chosen carefully by St. Luke as expressing the meaning which Christ intended to convey by the corresponding Aramaic terms which He used.

1. Now the word "honest" is the translation of the Greek *kalos*, and, in the customary phraseology of the time when St. Luke wrote, this word stood for a very distinctive idea when used in an ethical context. A *kalos* man was a man of highly-developed morals and spiritual sensitiveness.

A simple illustration may help us to appreciate the significance of this phrase. Two men stand before a great picture. One of them is endowed with artistic sensitiveness, the other lacks this power. To the latter the picture means little or nothing. He sees so much painted canvas, so much tarnished gold frame; a few commonplace reflections or reminiscences may be suggested to him, but there the matter ends. He soon gets tired of looking and would fain move elsewhere. But how different is the impression produced on

his companion. The very soul of the painter seems to leap out from the picture and to intertwine itself with his soul. He finds ideals implicit in his artistic consciousness realized there, his craving for beauty in form and colour satisfied, his own artistic self embodied, his artistic powers brought to fruition and given adequate expression. Very analogous to this is the meaning connoted by the word *kalos*. A *kalos* man is one who responds instinctively and immediately to a great moral and spiritual ideal or claim, just as an artist responds to a great work of art; who is thrilled and enthralled by it; who finds himself in it, himself as he ought to be and has been striving to be.

The word is used in this sense in connection with a striking episode in the Gospel narrative. We are told that one day, as Christ sat at meat in the house of Simon the Leper, a woman came in, bearing in her hands a costly vase of ointment, which she poured on His head. Some of those present took exception to an act which seemed to savour of extravagance. 'This ointment,' they said, 'might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.' But our Lord silenced them with the words, 'Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me': 'a good work'—*kalon ergon*.

2. Now consider the second word—that translated 'good.' The Greek word is *agathos*, which also, in the contemporary usage, was often given a special meaning. It stood not for goodness in general, but for the special kind of goodness which shows itself in heroic and self-sacrificing effort. An *agathos* man is one whose response to a great ideal is practical as well as emotional; who not merely understands and admires and is thrilled by it, but who is willing to identify himself and his life's work with it.

Take another illustration from the New Testament. We are told in one of the early chapters of the Acts that Barnabas, 'having land sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.' Later on, the narrative refers to him in the words: 'He was a good man; and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith'; 'a good man.' The epithet would be irrelevant, and therefore out of keeping with St. Luke's literary method, if goodness in general were meant. But not so if the word stands for goodness of this particular kind. Barnabas had recognized the world cause for which the Apostles stood, he had responded to it, and he had shown the reality of his response by making the sacrifice of his worldly goods, a sacrifice later on completed by that of a life's work and a martyr's death. 'He was a good man.'

Now if we put these two ideas together we get some conception of the characteristic quality of the man whom Christ symbolized by the good ground. He is a man who is both *kalos* and *agathos*—a man, on the one hand, whose soul, eyes, and ears are open, who can see the vision when it is presented to him, who can hear the claim when it is made upon him; and a man, on the other hand, who not merely hears and sees but also acts, whose response is practical as well as emotional, who is ready and willing to incur sacrifices, to take risks, to make ventures, to spend and be spent in God's cause. He is a man of ready eye and willing hand; a man who is something of an idealist and something of a hero.

¶ One Sunday morning—this is one of the most interesting incidents in Garrettson's whole life—although he was still unsettled in his mind, from a sense of duty he summoned the household for prayer. 'As I stood with a book in my hand in the act of giving out a hymn'—I give his own account of the event—'this thought powerfully struck my mind: "It is not right for you to keep your fellow creatures in bondage, you must let the oppressed go free." I knew it was that same blessed voice which had spoken to me before; till then I had never suspected that the practice of slavekeeping was wrong; I had not read a book on the subject or been told so by any. I paused a minute and then replied, "Lord, the oppressed *shall* go free"; and I was as clear of them in my mind as if I had never owned one. I told them they did not belong to me, and that I did not desire their services without making them a compensation. I was now at liberty to proceed in worship. After singing I kneeled to pray. Had I the tongue of an angel I could not have fully described what I felt. All my dejection and that melancholy gloom which preyed upon me vanished in a moment, and a divine sweetness ran through my whole frame.' Could anyone doubt that there had been a real change

of heart after such an unexpected proof of the sincerity of his new purpose? [1]

¶ Of Mr. Stanley Baldwin, Britain's latest Prime Minister, a 'Close Personal Friend' writing in *The Morning Post,* says: 'During the war Mr. Baldwin was oppressed by the consciousness that he could not make the sacrifices for his country which the youth of the nation was so cheerfully rendering. He accordingly had his whole private fortune valued, and contributed one-fourth part of the valuation to the Exchequer as a free-will offering.'

Of Mr. Baldwin it is also told that when a friend offered him congratulations on his appointment to the premiership he replied: 'It is your *prayers* I want, not your congratulations.' Surely it is well for a nation when such men rule.

Fruit with Patience.

Luke viii. 15.—'And bring forth fruit with patience.'

THIS sentence closes the parable of the Sower. You notice that those who bring forth fruit with patience are those who sincerely believe the truth, and are putting forth towards God living thoughts more beautiful than the blades of corn which make the fields in springtime promising and attractive. They may often be discouraged because growth is slow and abundant fruitfulness seems a long way off; and they will at once understand what is meant by bringing forth fruit with patience.

1. Everyone knows by observation or experience that after seed is sown a certain period of time must elapse and various influences in the atmosphere and in the soil must combine in their work before harvest can be reasonably expected. Accordingly the farmer waits quietly, not fretting himself, and not interfering with development, for only an untaught child would think of uncovering the seed to see how it was getting on. But the corn has only a short time to live. It is perishable, and soon after harvest it will be either crushed in order to give bread to the eater, or else used as seed for the sower, perishing in the soil in order that through it other grains may live. But the life which exists in germ within us is, unlike the corn, imperishable. Our Lord has said of His people: 'I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish.' Therefore the time of its development we must expect to be far longer. If we live, as Paul says we should, in 'the power of an endless life,' we shall not be unduly disheartened because within the short period of our earthly stay we do not see all the growth we hoped for.

(1) The temptation to impatience is that which arises from comparative failure, or from conspicuous slowness, in the progress of Christ's Kingdom, whether in ourselves or in others. We may be helped to resist this temptation by the reflection that as a rule what is slowest in reaching its end is highest in nature, grandest in result. You might almost measure the value of an effect produced by the length of time taken to produce it. Things gained quickest are generally of the least value when gained. Destruction, for example, is speedier and easier than development. The explosion of a torpedo under a ship will destroy in a flash what has taken years of steady work to build. Think of the development of the various parts of your own complex nature, and you will see that the same law holds good; that the higher you rise, the slower are the required results attained. For example, you may train yourself as a shorthand writer in six months, so as to take down the speeches of our greatest orators, but you could not become the great orator in as many years. You may quickly learn to use the telephone, but one of the greatest inventors of our time was working night and day for years to perfect it. Or consider what is purely mental, and you will find that the higher the class of work the slower you are in becoming fit to do it. Any schoolboy can write a letter, but even a genius must spend years in study before he can write the 'Idylls of the King.' Things worth doing are slow in the doing.

(2) Now see how this holds good in morals. As the loftiest moral nature is higher than the loftiest mental gift, so its attainment is slower. You may master a problem in algebra in a few minutes or hours, but you will not master a bad temper in as many years; and if from this you rise to the still higher spiritual life, you must not wonder that you do not quickly find yourself rejoicing in the habitual peace, gentleness, truthfulness, joy in the Holy Ghost which you read of, and still humbly seek to attain. Between your

[1] *Freeborn Garrettson*, 27.

will and your attainment there is an interval during which you will probably be tempted to doubt the reality of the Divine life and the helpfulness of prayer. 'Yes, ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.' By God's grace we must 'bring forth fruit with patience.'

Under the surface, the moulding sod,
The living thrill of the Spring abides,
Diffused in that silent fashioning clod,
For darkness can cherish the seed it hides;
Till forth to the light comes a yielded treasure,
In full and in overflowing measure.

Under the earth-life, Intensive Life
Pulsing and throbbing to bud and flower.
Tho' winter lies bare on the heart, yet rife
Is the quiet upspringing, the germinant power;
And then . . . the abundance that God's sweet leisure
Brings forth from His overflowing measure![1]

2. Those, then, are some of the reasons why we should have patience in fruit-bearing. And what are the occasions for its exercise?

(1) *Our own character.*—Some grow disheartened because they do not seem to make the progress that they did at the beginning. In the first realization they had of Christ's love and ownership, they abandoned certain practices and changed very considerably their mode of life, but now there is not much alteration from year to year. They should remember that then they had to deal with what was lower, and therefore more swiftly attained, whereas now they are concerned with what is higher; and in it they ought not to be discouraged if only the heart is right and the aim is straight and the love to God is true, for already a process is set up which in God's good time shall conform them to the image of Christ. If, for example, you have some fault which you have managed to curb only so far as outward expression is concerned, do not give up in despair because the inward temper is not yet all it should be. Or let us suppose that your easily besetting sin is fretfulness and irritability. When you became a Christian you knew this to be wrong, and prayed every day for grace to set a watch upon the door of your lips; and you did this. So far you succeeded; but you are conscious that the temper which dictated unkind speech is not gone, and you are tempted to say, 'What is the good of trying? The inward feeling is not conquered, and in the sight of the Searcher of Hearts I am no better than I was.' But depend upon it that the hardly kept silence you now maintain when you are annoyed is the first step towards complete cure. From your resolute repression of the outward will come the complete conquest of the inward.

(2) *Our work for the Master.*—We are working, remember, in the higher sphere, where results are more slowly reached, and are less easily tabulated. An artisan makes something which can be seen, and he soon rejoices over his completed work and can estimate it. A writer for the press pens an article in some crisis of national affairs; the effect is to divert the policy of a government from wrong to right; yet perhaps he does not know it, and certainly cannot trace it. The higher the level of your work, the less are you likely to be able to calculate its effects. And Christian workers labour on the highest level of all, where the Son of God worked, nay, is still working by His Holy Spirit.

(3) *Christ's work in the world.*—It may give us cheer when we are downcast about Christ's work in general. When we see the wastes of heathenism which the feet of the good Sower have never trodden, when we think of nations in whose social life thorns seem choking the good seed, when we see lands once promising well now destitute of Christianity, as if in the shallow soil it had taken no root, we do become disheartened. But by this parable our Lord tried to prepare us for just this experience. He is patient with the world, and would have us patient too: ploughing, sowing, working, praying, believing that a harvest will come at last, and that we shall see issues by and by which we never saw or even expected here. And if any of us are assailing some giant vice or wrong, which seems too mighty to be overcome, still, in the strength of God, let us put forth against it all the power that is in us.

For Hercules himself must yield to odds,
And many strokes, though with a little axe,
Hew down and fell the hardest timbered oak.

[1] O. E. L., *Something*, 85.

'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.'

¶ One Sunday I had preached and there did not seem to be any result. On the Monday I was very much cast down. I was sitting in my study, brooding over my want of success, when a young man who conducted a Bible class of one hundred adults in my Sabbath-school called upon me. As he came in I could see he was away up on the mountain-top, while I was down in the valley. Said he:

'What kind of a day did you have yesterday?'

'Very poor; I had no success, and I feel quite cast down. How did you get on?'

'Oh, grandly! I never had a better day.'

'What was your subject?'

'I had the life and character of Noah. Did you ever preach on Noah? Did you ever study up his life?'

'Well, no. I don't know that I ever made it a special study. I thought I knew pretty well all there was in the Bible about him: you know it is all contained in a few verses.'

'If you never studied it before you had better do it now,' said he. 'It will do you good. Noah was a wonderful character.'

When the young man went away I got out my Bible and some other books, and read all I could find about Noah. I had not been reading long before the thought came stealing over me: 'Here is a man who toiled on for a hundred and twenty years and never had a single convert outside his own family. Yet he did not get discouraged.'

I closed my Bible; the cloud had gone; I started out to a noon prayer-meeting. I had not been there long when a man got up and said he had come from a little town in Illinois. On the day before he had admitted a hundred young converts to church membership. As he was speaking I said to myself, 'I wonder what Noah would have given if he could have heard that! He never had any such results from *his* labours.'

Then in a little while a man who sat behind me stood up and said, 'I wish you would pray for me; I would like to become a Christian.' Thought I to myself, 'I wonder what Noah would have given if he had heard that! He never heard a single soul asking God for mercy, yet he did not get discouraged.'

I have never hung my harp on the willows since that day.[1]

The Lighted Lamp.

Luke viii. 16.—'No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.'

After explaining the parable of the Sower, Jesus brings in a new parable of a man lighting a lamp, (for the 'candle' of the Authorized Version is just the ordinary earthenware lamp of the East and the 'candlestick' is the lampstand), and putting it in the position where it will be most useful. A certain husbandman is expecting strangers to visit him. They have delayed their coming till after sunset. It is now dark, and getting late. He wishes to give them a hearty welcome. When they come to his door, he would like that there should be light enough to let them read welcome in his face, and to let him see that there was no doubt in theirs. He would not like them to stumble on his threshold for want of light; nor would he like them to stand not knowing whether it was a friend or a foe that was coming to meet them in the dark.

He has a lamp in the house; and having lighted it, he is not so mad or foolish as to place it under the bench on which his guests are to recline at supper, or under his seed basket or the vessel in which he measures out his corn. He brings out the very thing made for the purpose; and setting the lamp on it, he so places the lampstand that the light shall both lead the strangers to the house and gladden them when they enter it. They will be drawn towards the light; and coming to it, they will see at once, by the friendly face and the well-spread supper table and all things ready for them, that this is the very house, and this is the very friend for whom they were searching. Jesus says to His disciples now, as He did then—(1) you are God's lighted lamp; (2) you are on your lampstand; (3) you are expected to be a guiding light to bring souls to God, and to be serviceable to those who are already His servants.

1. *You are God's lighted lamp.*—He has gifted

[1] *The Life of Dwight L. Moody*, 72.

you with just such light as multitudes of your fellow-men need. They do not know, to the extent you do, how gracious the Lord is; how hospitable He is; what wondrous provision He has made for their relief and comfort. What an amount of knowledge you have been taking in from childhood—concerning God, what He is, what He has done, and means to do; concerning yourself, what you are, what you have been, what you may become; concerning sin, its guilt, its danger, its deceitfulness; concerning the way of being saved from these. All that knowledge is God's light—He is the Fountain of it, and He has made you a vessel of it. *You* are God's lighted lamp.

2. *You are on your lampstand.*—Wherever you spend your life, in whatever lawful occupation you are engaged, you are on your lampstand. It is not only a place for shining; it is *the* place for *your* shining. It is *your* lampstand. You will often be tempted to conceal your light through shame, or covetousness, or fear of man; and to justify yourself by thinking that if you were in altered circumstances, in such and such company, or in such and such a situation, you would let it shine. But as things stand you cannot. You don't do it, or intend to do it; moreover, you may think it hardly right that you should be expected to do it, in present circumstances.

Thus are you charging God with falsehood, or with foolishness, as though He had placed His lamp blunderingly underneath the basket or the bench! How many there have been who, having God's light in them, refused to hide it or let it be hid! They made no excuse of their circumstances. So it was with the prophet Daniel, with Stephen, with Paul, with George Wishart, John Brown of Priesthill, and the whole host of those who, in our own or other lands and ages, suffered the spoiling of their goods, were tortured, sawn asunder, submitted to the teeth of lions, rack and thumb-screws, fire and sword, rather than let God's light in them be extinguished or concealed. Without doubt, God sets His lamp in the lampstand.

¶ When Mr. Moody visited Cambridge he met with a very stormy reception from the students, but he persisted in holding the meetings arranged, and on the fifth night the tide turned. Who that was privileged to witness it will ever forget the scene? I may remind old Cambridge men that there is a gallery in the gymnasium used as a fencing-room, and approached by a long flight of steps from the gymnasium below. The preacher's subject was 'The Marriage Supper of the Lamb.' At the close of his address he asked any who intended to be present at that marriage supper to rise and go up into the gallery—a terrible test. Amidst an awful stillness a young Trinity man arose, faced the crowd of men, and deliberately ascended the stairs. In a moment scores of men were on their feet, following him to that upper room. Many that night made the great decision.[1]

3. *You are to be light-bringers to the unenlightened.*—It is a dark world, not merely in heathen lands; there are souls around you who do not love and fear God—why? Simply because they do not know Him well enough. The light that gladdens you is needed to gladden them; they might get it, where you have got it, in the Word of God, in the House of God, but they will not choose to come for it; and it is expected that you will convey to them what they will not take the trouble to come for. Many are in the light, but not of it. It has not shined in their hearts. You come in contact with them every day; and they are waiting to see the graciousness of God's character revealed in the graciousness of yours.

Stars are of mighty use: the night
Is dark and long;
The road foul, and where one goes right,
Six may go wrong.
One twinkling ray,
Shot o'er some cloud,
May clear much way,
And guide a crowd.

God's saints are shining lights: who stays
Here long must pass
O'er dark hills, swift streams, and steep ways
As smooth as glass;
But these all night,
Like candles, shed
Their beams, and light
Us into bed.

They are indeed our pillar-fires,
Seen as we go;

[1] *The Life of Dwight L. Moody*, 308.

They are that city's shining spires
We travel to. A swordlike gleam
Kept man for sin First out; this beam
Will guide him in.[1]

[1] Henry Vaughan.

HEARING.

Luke viii. 18.—'Take heed therefore how ye hear.'

Our Lord here utters a solemn warning to all who are privileged to hear the Word of the gospel that their manner of hearing it is of vital importance. This warning follows upon the parable of the Sower, in which it is shown that the harvest depends not merely upon the sowing of the good seed but upon the character of the soil into which it falls. If the ground is hard the good seed cannot take root, if rocky it springs up only to wither, if full of thorns it is choked. Only where the soil is deep and well prepared does the good seed grow to an abundant harvest. This, being interpreted, means that the manner in which anyone hears the Word is, in the end, the decisive element in his salvation.

The importance of hearing is as great as the importance of preaching. You think of the responsibility of the man in the pulpit. How solemn to stand up before the people and declare the Word of God! Have you thought of the responsibility of the man in the pew? How solemn to enter the house of God and hear the Word spoken, that Word which will be to each hearer a savour of life unto life or of death unto death!

Shakespeare says:

> A jest's prosperity lies in the ear
> Of him that hears it, never in the tongue
> Of him that makes it.[1]

Be the word spoken never so wise or witty, if the hearer's ear be too dull to catch it, it sounds like foolishness and is answered only by a dull and bovine stare. Plutarch tells us that Demosthenes was wont to say that, with all his gifts of speech, his ability to make his meaning clear was not so perfect but that it required great candour and indulgence in the audience.[2] And Lord Macaulay, explaining to himself the failure of one of his best speeches, remarks, 'Old Demosthenes was right when he said, the power of oratory is as much in the ear as in the tongue.'[1]

Even so is it with the preaching of the Word. The happy issue is dependent on the hearing ear and the understanding heart. If ears are dull and minds deadened, if the hearers are hostile or distracted, then the music of the gospel is only so much meaningless sound. 'A consciousness in the shepherds and in the wise men made the angel chorus and the star each alike possible. Could Annas or Caiaphas have heard the song, had either been that night in the field of Bethlehem? Did Herod see the star? Did the chief priests and the scribes of the people see it? The conditions of hearing and seeing were found in the kinship of the hearers and seers with the eternal, the unifying power of the Christ-consciousness; the occasions of hearing and seeing were the intensive invasions of prepared human sense by that consciousness.[2] Could Annas or Caiaphas have heard the angels' song? Probably not. At any rate when there came a voice from heaven testifying of the glory of the incarnate Son, 'the people that stood by and heard it said that it thundered.'

Right hearing, then, is vital. After the Revival of '59 the question was asked, What made the preaching of that wonderful time so powerful and convincing? One who had full knowledge and experience of it attributed the result to the hearers as much as to the preachers. 'While the ministers preached after much prayer and with the almost assured expectation of getting the blessing, the people came believing that they would meet with God.'[3]

What, then, are the essentials of right hearing?

[1] *Love's Labour's Lost*, v. ii. 869.
[2] *Lives* (Langhorne's ed.), 606.

[1] *Life and Letters*, 391.
[2] H. M. Du Bose, *The Consciousness of Jesus*, 48.
[3] *Life of John Milne*, 58.

I.

The Preparation of the Hearer.

Before the sower goes forth to sow, the ground must be prepared for the reception of the seed. Unless the soil be well prepared the seed has little chance to germinate and grow to the harvest. To change the metaphor, no matter how skilful the musician may be to play upon an instrument, if the instrument be not first of all tuned the result is jarring discord. We are all more or less familiar with the wonders of wireless; we know that all about us the air is full of innumerable vibrations which are capable of conveying to us the finest music and eloquence of the world. But first we need a receiving instrument tuned to the wave length, otherwise we cannot hear. So must the soul be attuned to the Word of God if it is to be more to us than meaningless sound. 'Melody lies not in the notes upon the paper, not in the instrument, not in the player's fingers, but in his heart and in the hearts of those who thrill to hear. It is an echo. If you are deaf no echo comes, aye, though you should read the notes and watch the player's fingers move. I have been deaf and am. Now I will learn to hear the music. I will attune myself so that I may hear that which they hear. Then shall I know what these things mean.'[1]

God is not dumb, that He should speak no more,
If thou hast wanderings in the wilderness
And find'st not Sinai, 'tis thy soul is poor;
There towers the Mountain of the Voice no less,
Which whoso seeks shall find, but he who bends,
Intent on manna still and mortal ends,
Sees it not, neither hears its thundered lore.[2]

Ruskin says 'the principal reason for Turner's having got the reputation of always refusing advice was, that artists came to him in a state of mind in which he knew they could not receive it.'[3] How many come to the hearing of the Word in a state of mind which unfits them for receiving it. They bring with them jangled nerves, a mind obsessed by prejudice or debased by earthliness and they can hear only some perverted echo of the Word. George Eliot said, 'Solomon's Proverbs, I think, have omitted to say, that as the sore palate findeth grit, so an uneasy consciousness heareth innuendos.'[1] Not without serious effort is the mind purified and made fit to hear.

And Warden of my soul's stained house, where
love and hate are born,
Oh, make it clean, if swept must be with pain's
rough broom of thorn!
And quiet impose, so straining ears with world-
din racked and torn
May catch what God doth say.

Prayer is, of all things, the best preparation for the hearing of the Word. Let the hearer pray for the preacher that he may be directed and sustained in uttering his message. How often does St. Paul entreat the prayers of his friends that he may be upheld in the fulfilment of his ministry. Let the hearer also pray for himself and for other hearers that God would bless to them the word to be spoken and open their hearts to receive the truth in the love of it. With such prayer to precede the preaching of the Word, the soil is prepared for receiving the good seed, and the preacher's task becomes full of hope. Referring to a memorable experience Dr. Horton says, 'That was one of the occasions when I learnt how much the hearers do for a preacher. If they pray and expect and believe, their minister rises above himself, and gives to them the Word of God, in spite, as it were, of himself.'[2] Doubtless the Word preached is a living Word which can make a way for itself into the soul and work miracles of transformation there, in cleansing the impure, rousing the careless and quickening the dead. Doubtless, also, apart from the life-giving Word the hearer's soul can never be attuned to the voice of God. Still by prayer the hearer may waken within himself that sense of need, that hunger and thirst of spirit which is the best preparation for the right hearing of the Word.

II.

Receiving the Word.

It is the duty of the hearer actively to aid the preacher in his effort to convey the truth.

[1] H. Fielding Hall, *The Inward Light*, 34.
[2] J. R. Lowell.
[3] *Modern Painters*, v. chap. xii.

[1] *Middlemarch*.
[2] *Autobiography*, 155.

Thoreau has strikingly said, 'It takes two to speak the truth—one to speak and another to hear.' The good listener is as necessary as the good preacher. 'In every audience there are listeners who have almost as much to do with the speaker's felicity and eloquence as he has himself; they are persons who listen actively, not passively.' [1]

1. Hear the Word with *attention*. To have the mind wide awake and interested is the secret of a good memory. 'We hear most surely what we want to hear. Out of the interests of the heart the ears hear. "Take heed how ye hear" is a by-law under our moral constitution. What concerns us catches our attention. If kindergarten or photography, if recipes or servants or babies, are supreme in our thoughts, we hear about them on all sides. What kind of thing makes our ears prick up most quickly? The old poet Rogers said, "I have a very weak voice, and if I did not say ill-natured things, no one would hear what I said." He knew too well what interested most people. Could he have counted on us?' [2]

It is not easy to give attention to spiritual things. Jowett confessed with humiliation that he could not fix his mind steadily on them for five consecutive minutes. Least of all is it easy for those whose minds have grown dull through long familiarity with the preacher's word. Tennyson has inimitably described such a mind in his Northern Farmer:

'An' I hallus coom'd to's chooch afoor moy Sally wur deäd,
An' 'eärd 'um a bummin' awaäy loike a buzzard-clock ower my 'eäd,
An' I niver knaw'd whot a meän'd but I thowt a 'ad summut to saäy,
An' I thowt a said whot a owt to 'a said an' I coom'd awaäy.'

The Northern Farmer belongs to a numerous clan, who have ears to hear, but hear not neither do they understand.

It is commonly urged that it is the preacher's business to catch and hold the attention of his hearers. His work is even compared at times to that of a public entertainer, who is a failure unless he can draw the crowd. Doubtless the preacher must do his best, but it is equally the hearer's duty to aid him by giving earnest attention to the Word, such attention as befits so solemn and momentous a theme.

2. Hear the Word with *humility*, which is just another name for teachableness. Humility is required of every learner. Some are too proud to learn, too clever to be taught. The man who declares that he is wiser than all his teachers will learn no more from them. It is said of Lord Cockburn that he was a comparative failure on the Bench because, deceived by his quickness into the idea that he could know everything intuitively, he was a restless listener, and could not hear the evidence patiently. Such was the mood of the Athenians as they listened to Paul preaching on Mars' Hill. Familiar with every school of philosophy and full of self-conceit as the citizens of Athens, the intellectual centre of the world, they asked superciliously, 'What will this babbler say?' The result of such hearing was a foregone conclusion. No mighty works were done in Athens, no flourishing Christian church was established there, nor do we possess any epistle of Paul to the Athenians.

Solomon says, 'Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him.' Some of the most hopeless hearers belong to this category. They feel themselves able to sit in judgment on the preacher, to criticize his doctrine, his elocution, his mannerisms. At times they can hear acutely enough—for their neighbours. They may even condescend to think the sermon excellent for the ordinary man. But for themselves they feel above the need of it. Their place is on the Bench, never at the Bar. As they will not suffer themselves to be convicted of sin, they will never be made wise unto salvation. Of such hearers Jesus says, 'Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.' The child-mind is humble and teachable, hence the boundless hope of childhood.

3. Hear the Word with *sympathy*. Every preacher would wish to have a sympathetic audience both for his own sake and for theirs. Without sympathy he cannot give, nor they

[1] H. W. Mabie, *My Study Fire*, ii. 5.
[2] M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Every-Day Living*, 36.

receive, his best. An indifferent or hostile audience has power to chill the preacher to the marrow of his bones. Now it is impossible to be without bias of some sort. The cold light of reason is a sheer abstraction, no more to be found in real life than a mathematical straight line. Every human being is a complex of passions and desires which colour all his thinking. He has a past history full of old memories and associations of which he can no more divest himself than he can begin living over again. Sir Henry Jones makes this confession of himself, 'For many years I have professed to be a moral philosopher. As a moral philosopher I am bound, as other men are not, to analyse character, and, so far as I can, show it in the making. I am bound to put opinions and beliefs unconsciously and uncritically adopted, to rigorous tests. Does the reader believe that, in doing so, I am able to free myself of the elements introduced into my very being when I was a growing boy and youth in that quiet little village? I myself am under no such delusion. I can hardly help taking my stand at the side of the working man, or, if I think him wrong, being generous in my excuses for him. The memory of my father comes up when I try to measure the value of the services and the pay of the workers. But my sympathy for the employer and capitalist is always slow to flow; and I find myself wondering what their wages would be were they paid according to the value of their social services. Day by day I find new evidence that to be fair all round is beyond my power.' [1]

Among the hearers of the Word not one is without bias. To give a wholly impartial hearing is beyond a man's power. All the good in a man, the holy memories of childhood, the aspirations and ideals of youth, the secret intuitions of his highest moments, rise up to welcome and confirm the Word. All the evil in him is roused to opposition. Every sinful lust and passion takes arms against the Word, and will fight to the death for the supremacy of self. Jesus repeatedly refers to the bias which determines men's attitude to the truth. 'Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.' 'He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.' Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.' He that would hear the Word aright must recognize and make allowance for this bias, must not permit self to deceive or passion to pervert his hearing. If bias there must be, then let it be on the side of goodness and truth, of self-sacrifice and holy love. So will the Word of the gospel ring with conviction through heart and conscience, and authenticate itself as Divine.

[1] *Old Memories*, 47.

III.

Obedience to the Word.

This is the crown of hearing, and without this no one has heard aright. Hearing includes obedience, as when one says, 'I advised him, but he would not hear me.' The Greek of the New Testament neatly expresses this by the verb 'to hear' followed by the genitive, which means to hearken to or obey, as distinct from the same verb followed by the accusative, which means simply to hear the sound or voice. For example, 'The sheep did not hear them,' 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him,' where it is not the mere hearing of the ear that is intended, but that inward hearing which means to follow or obey.

In modern education much emphasis is laid on expression work, that is, the working out in practice of the principles taught. Learning is now recognized to be not a matter of words and memory, but of life and work. A child cannot be held to have learnt a truth until he knows how to handle it and make practical application of it. Practice is the surest way of learning. So is it with the hearing of the Word. Only he who obeys has heard aright, for the truth is not abstract, but has an immediate bearing on character and conduct. The Word was embodied in a Life, and in order to be received it must be lived. It is by obedience that we learn. A story is told of a native convert in Korea, who had learnt by heart the whole of the Sermon on the Mount, that when his missionary expressed surprise at his memory, he replied that it was indeed hard to remember until he hit upon the plan of trying to practise each precept as he learnt it,

and by this means he printed it indelibly upon his mind. It is only hearing of this practical kind that is effectual and fruitful. Not merely to hear with the ears or to store the memory, but to hear with the soul, to take in the living Word for the renewing of the whole inner man and the transforming of the whole outward life, this is to hear aright.

Hearing, then, is a very serious business and fraught with tremendous issues. Every reason that makes it dreadful to preach makes it equally serious to hear. The Apostle Paul speaks of those who by a careless handling of the holy things of the Sacrament 'eat and drink judgment to themselves, not discerning the Lord's body.' What is true of the Sacrament is equally true of the Word, for it is 'quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.' It is not to be played with. On D. L. Moody's first visit to England he addressed a meeting of the students of Oxford amid much interruption and mockery, which he bore with composure until it came to the reading of Scripture. Then he paused and said, 'It is a small matter to make sport of men's words, but when it comes to mockery of the Word of God—I'd sooner play with forked lightning.' And he flung his hands upward with an electric quiver. Thereafter there was a stillness that could be felt.

We sometimes think with pity of the heathen who have never heard the Word, but far more pitiable may be the state of many who have often heard it. Mrs. Cecil-Smith of the China Inland Mission tells an incident which occurred as she and the native workers associated with her were leaving a place where the Word had been preached for a short time. 'As we hurried away, the cry came after us, and it has been ringing in my ears very often since that night, "*Can I be saved with hearing only once? Oh, tell me, can I be saved with hearing only once?*"' What of us, who have heard oftener than we can remember, what of us?

J. H. Morrison.

Hearing: What and How.

Mark iv. 24.—'Take heed what ye hear.'
Luke viii. 18.—'Take heed . . . how ye hear.'

It may seem to us for the moment, when we consider these two passages, as if we were concerned with two different subjects, or at least with two separate aspects of the function of hearing. One of them seems to call attention to the substance of the message—'Take heed what ye hear.' Be sure that the content of any message that comes into your mind is true and helpful. The other seems rather to direct attention to the attitude of the hearer—'Take heed how ye hear.' Secure a right standpoint for judging the message; take care to receive it in such a way as to gain from it its full profit. Beyond doubt there is a great deal to be said for thus distinguishing between the matter and the manner of hearing. Yet the truer thought here is to link both together. For, after all, the 'what' and the 'how' can never be separated from one another. What we hear depends on how we hear; and how we hear, the kind of hearers we are, the mental attitude we adopt, depends upon what we have heard and welcomed and used already.

It is significant that both these Evangelists are reporting the same conversation of Jesus. There was, of course, no shorthand report of His words. Indeed, they were not spoken in the Greek of the New Testament, but in His native Aramaic. 'Take heed what ye hear,' Mark thinks the best rendering. Luke thinks he may arrive at the meaning more closely by the slight variation, 'Take heed therefore how ye hear.' It is a happy fact that we have these two versions, for the truth is, both ideas, as the context indicates, were in the mind of Jesus. The 'what' and the 'how' cannot be separated from one another. The judge listens prayerfully and earnestly, and he hears only good.

1. Take heed what ye hear. 'But,' it will be said, 'surely that is not always within my power. I can hear only what is said, and I cannot always prevent myself hearing some things which ought not to be said.' Of course the reference is not to the mere mechanical action of hearing. We cannot go through the streets without hearing the

noises there. We cannot go through the world without sometimes hearing the conversation of fools. Some things we hear involuntarily. But we can determine the things to which we will listen, and give heed, and that is what our Lord meant when He said 'Take heed what ye hear.' No doubt He was addressing people who specially needed the warning. They were accustomed to hear certain teachings from their scribes. They had a Law of ancient origin, the Word that had come to them from God Himself; but they were continually hearing certain explanations of the Law and traditions adding to the Law, which were not, of necessity, the Word of God. Jesus wanted them to listen with enquiring minds, and to ascertain whether the things said were really the truth. They could not evade personal responsibility for the teaching they accepted. 'Take heed what ye hear.'

The crowds go to listen to anything that entertains or amuses for the moment, quite regardless of its character and tone. But no one can listen to vulgarity and inanity without some loss of soul-power; and these qualities are too often evident in the entertainments which attract the multitude. We need to exclude from our hearing all that is vulgar and worthless. 'We must avoid it, and pass not by it.'

¶ Bunyan, in his *Holy War*, very rightly makes Eargate the busiest place in the town of Mansoul. There comes Diabolus with his false but seductive speech, and there come the messengers of the great King. The transactions of Eargate decided the fate of Mansoul, and they often do so still. Do we not all wish we could blot out of the memory some of the things we have heard? Christian people need to be very careful what takes place at the Eargate of their own soul, and of the souls of those who are committed to their charge. It may be that ere long the Church will have to undertake a vigorous crusade against the foes of men who press towards this avenue to the soul.[1]

2. 'Take heed how ye hear.' 'He that hath an ear let him hear.' Hearing is an art to be acquired. Some effort is necessary, and perhaps the word 'how' in this sentence expresses most forcibly the teaching of the parable with which it is connected. When applying the meaning of that parable, the Lord quoted the words of Isaiah, 'This people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed'; but He altered the verbs in the quotation so as to make it plain that the fault was entirely in the hearer. 'But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear.' The profitableness of the truth depends upon the mental attidude of the hearer. It depends very much indeed upon *how* ye hear. Yet most people are firmly convinced that it depends upon the preacher, just as a deaf person is inclined to blame the speaker rather than his own infirmity.

In a lecture on 'Preaching' we read that 'to the preacher the event of the week is the sermon,' and, of course, that is as it should be. It is the preacher's duty to make the very best of his sermon. Christian people generally give him every encouragement to do this, for to some of them also the sermon is 'the event of the week.' But there are differences in hearers, as every preacher well knows. There are some congregations and some individual hearers who inspire a preacher to do his utmost, and draw from him sometimes better things than he knew were in him; but there are others who would quench the fervour of an archangel.

¶ I chanced to hear Dr. Whyte, of St. George's, Edinburgh, preach the funeral sermon of one of his elders, the late Lord Ardmillan; and I have never forgotten a beautiful thing he said about him. It was this, that the deceased elder had one of those minds which enrich what they hear out of their own resources. There are such minds, which magnify and glorify what the preacher has said, as, in a belfry, if you strike one of the bells, the others will begin to vibrate, so that a chime instead of a single note is heard by an attentive ear. It is no unusual thing for a preacher, even in his study, to be aware of one hearer in the congregation beneath whose intelligence he must not fall on Sunday; but there are whole congregations so intelligent that the mind of the preacher almost unconsciously sways to their intellectual level; and there are congregations too, through which there is diffused such a spiritual strain that a secular tone in one who is preaching to them is an outrage.[1]

[1] J. S. Corlett.

[1] J. Stalker.

The Law of Increase.

Luke viii. 18.—'Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given.'

On two different occasions our Lord warned His disciples of this rule of God's government of the world. There is something startling in it when it is thus enunciated, and we are tempted to cry out against it as unjust. What, give to those who least want a gift! take from those who are worst able to spare, to part with anything! Can anything be more unlike all we know of our Lord's character than that He should approve the principle of stripping the poor in order to add unneeded luxury to the rich?

1. Yet it is difficult to deny that this actually is the rule by which the world is governed. 'Much will have more' is one of those sayings in which men pack into a short proverb the result of multiplied experience. Sometimes it happens, in real life as in legendary tales, that a man comes to London with the proverbial half-crown in his pocket, and finishes with wealth enough to satisfy the dreams of avarice: when such a man tells the history of his progress, you find that the first years were a time of slow and painful struggle, the small profits put together by patient saving making up a sum so poor as to seem a most inadequate reward for the sacrifice the accumulation had cost. However, by the time the first hundred pounds had been gained the worst of the struggle was over; when the hundred had reached a thousand, little effort was needed, accumulation seemed to take care of itself, and progress went on by leaps and bounds.

2. Nor is it only in the case of material wealth that the law holds good, 'To him that hath shall more be given.' The difficulty would be to find any department in which the law does not hold good. Take the case of intellectual wealth, the more a man knows, the easier it is to add to his knowledge. Take the dull uncultured peasant, is he the pupil to whom you would choose to impart a new idea, or an improved method of doing even the works with which he is most familiar? As anyone adds to his knowledge, his thirst for knowledge increases as well as his faculty for imbibing it. Make one whose mind is already well stored acquainted with a new fact or a new principle, and he perceives a multitude of relations between this new acquisition and the things with which he had been previously acquainted. That information, which by an ignorant person would have been received at best with indolent curiosity, and have been forgotten as soon as learned, becomes to him a key which opens the door to many new chambers of knowledge; or, to employ our Lord's own illustration, that talent for which the ignorant person could find no better use than to hide it away, wrapped up in a napkin, if entrusted to a wealthy banker, is made to yield profitable interest.

¶ No better illustration of the proverb could we offer than the well-known passage in Mr. Darwin's Memoir, where he gives an account of the growth and decay of the various faculties of his mind. 'My mind,' he says, 'seems to have become a kind of machine, grinding general laws out of large collections of facts. I have tried lately to read Shakespeare, but found it so dull that it nauseated me. I have also lost my taste for pictures and music.' In a word he sums up this condition in characteristically physiological language as 'the atrophy of that part of the brain on which the higher tastes depend.' To him that had, to the scientific observer, it was given, and surely he had abundance; but from him that had not was taken away what at first he seemed to have.[1]

3. The laws which regulate the acquirement of knowledge are the same, whether the knowledge be purely intellectual, or religious, or spiritual. The chapter from which our text is taken records the circumstances under which the words of the text were spoken. Our Lord had been asked why He reserved His full instructions for His disciples, and spoke to the multitude only in parables—that is to say, in a form in which the instruction would not be apprehended unless by those whose curiosity had been excited to look below the superficial meaning of the words uttered. In the parable of the Sower He gave them the explanation that seed sown depends for its growth on being cast into a good and well-prepared soil. Who could expect seed to grow if dropped on

[1] H. C. Beeching.

the hard-beaten highway? It but lies there until the birds carry it off. In like manner, who could expect the wisest words to bear fruit if uttered in the frozen ears of indifference? What is the fate of a paragraph in the newspapers announcing the latest scientific discovery, or the newest literary find? In men previously acquainted with the subject concerned it may excite the most lively interest, stirring them up to make exertions to become acquainted with the new truth in order to ascertain its relations to what they had known before. But the ordinary reader glances at the paragraph with a careless eye and passes on to something that interests him more. In a short time he forgets that he has ever seen it. And the same rule is observed with regard to the communication of spiritual and religious truth. The first condition necessary so that the communication should produce any effect is, that those to whom it is made should feel an interest in the subject. The wise man said: 'Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?' With good reason, then, was our Lord's teaching to the multitude different from that to His disciples. Until they had been made to awake from indifference, instruction could do no more than gratify a passing and unfruitful curiosity.

4. Thus our Lord in His discourse justifies His conduct in making known the myteries of His Kingdom, not to the mixed crowd of careless bystanders, but to select disciples who had shown themselves attentive and eager listeners. But to them, too, the warning must be given: Do *you* take heed how *you* hear. Their hearts had not been hardened by roadside indifference; but they might be full of noxious weeds which in their growth would smother the fruit of the good seed. And this we know actually happened in at least one case. Whether the crime of Judas was inspired by avarice, as the Gospel history would suggest, or, as some modern thinkers have imagined, from disappointed ambition, or from a desire that the exigencies of peril should force our Lord into an exercise of supernatural power which would put Him into His proper place as a temporal ruler; in any case, there clearly were in the heart of the traitor Apostle noxious weeds which found there a more congenial soil than that which had been sown by our Lord. The practical lesson then remains for you, 'Take heed how ye hear.' If you would be worthy hearers of the Word, you must prepare your hearts so that they may be fitted for its reception; you must break up the hard stony ground; you must weed out the choking thorns. True, the preparations of the heart are from God. But God acts through the wills of men, not in violation of their freedom; and He has left it possible for them to commit the sin with which Jews of old were charged by the preacher who cried: 'Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye.'

Unto him that hath Thou givest
Ever more abundantly.
Lord, I live because Thou livest,
Therefore give new life to me;
Therefore speed me in the race;
Therefore let me grow in grace.

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